The unbearable inanity of Tim Russert

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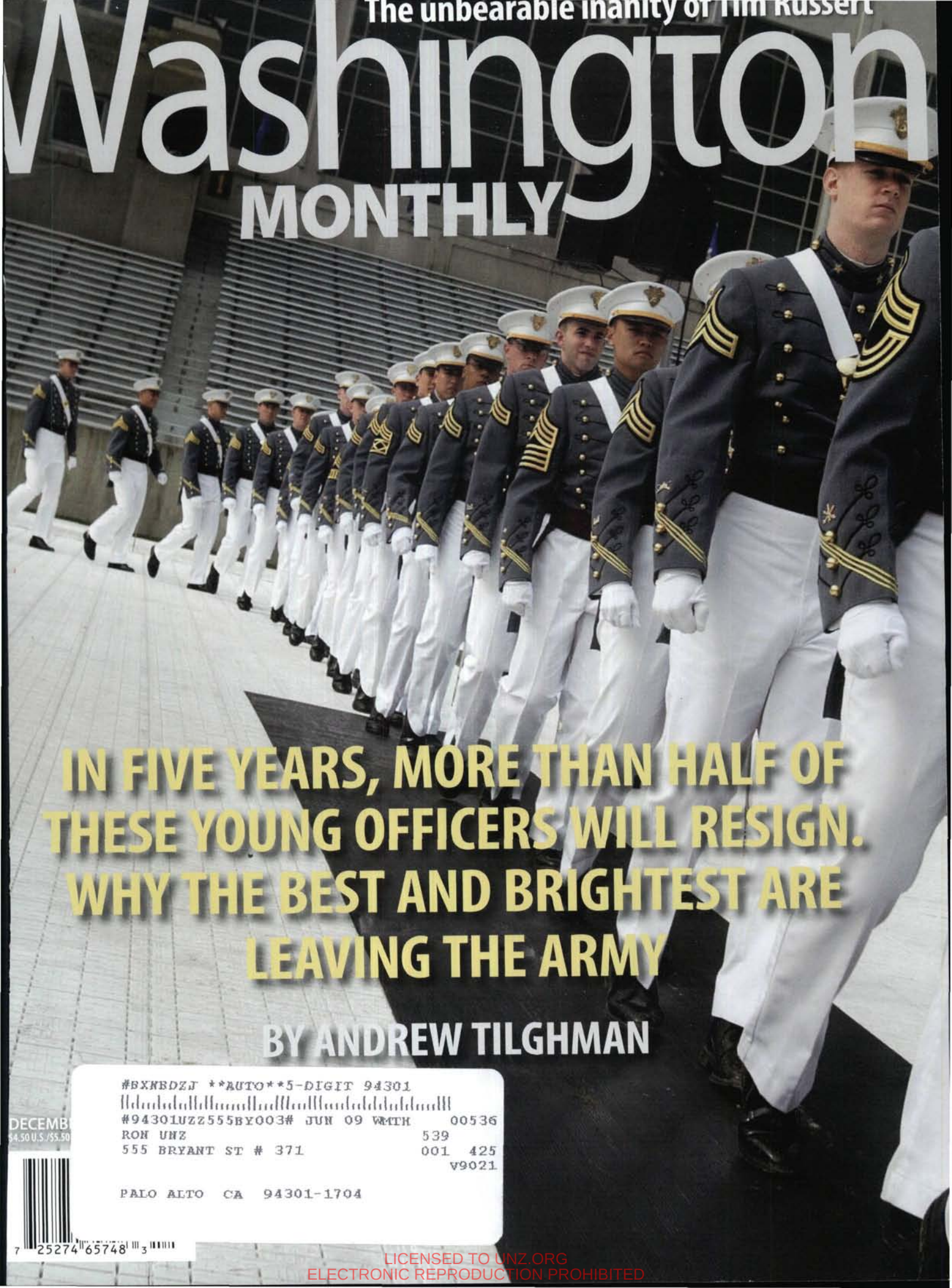

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BY ANDREW TILGHMAN

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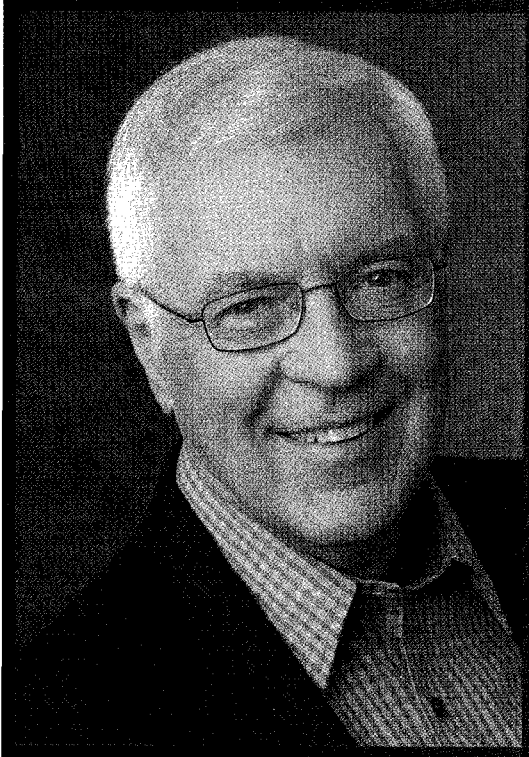

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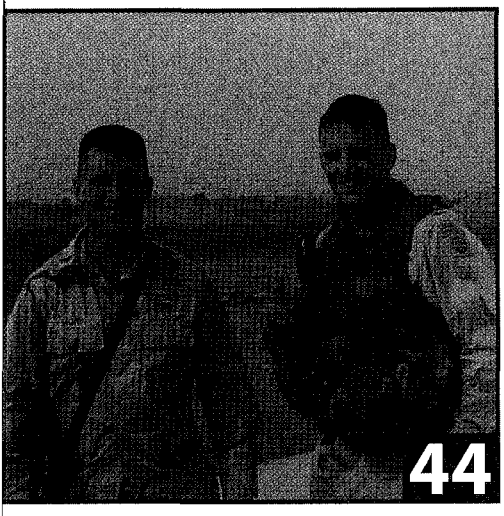

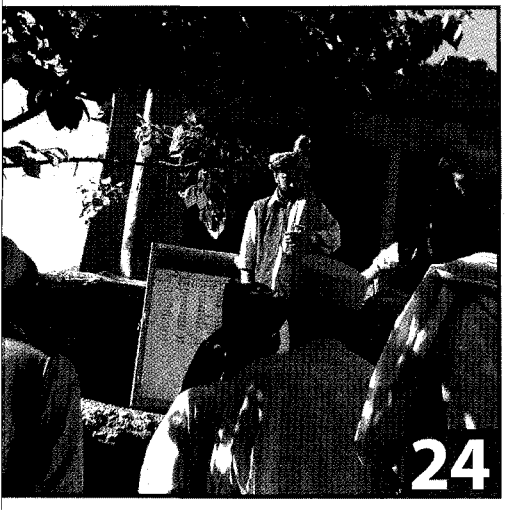

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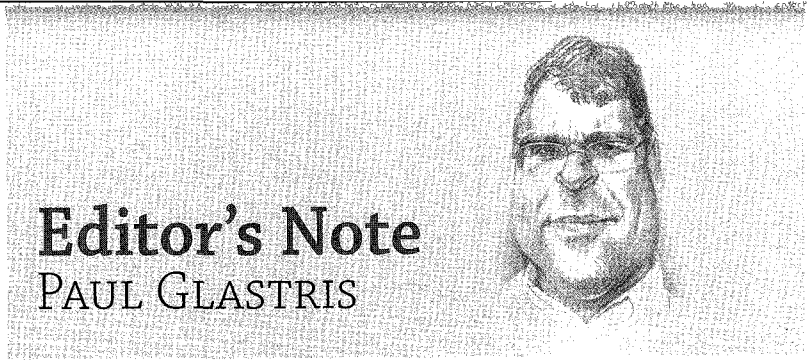

Editor's Note

PAUL GLASTRIS

The Politics of Resentment

This month we feature, among other fine pieces, a profile by Jacob Heilbrunn of über-neocon Norman Podhoretz (see "Norman's Conquest," page 32). Podhoretz is a senior foreign policy advisor to Rudy Giuliani. He has argued that the Iraq War is a triumphant success and that bombing Iran is an unavoidable necessity. Most recently, he has suggested that the latest National Intelligence Estimate concluding that Iran stopped its nuclear weapons in 2003 is the work of disloyal anti-Bush intelligence officials—a notion he retracted after it was pointed out to him that the president's own people control the elaborate process by which the NIE is put together.

That Podhoretz would make such accusations, and such a rookie mistake, isn't surprising. He has no government experience, no real foreign policy expertise, and has spent his entire professional life as an editor and polemical essayist. Why, then, would Giuliani choose him as a foreign policy mentor? The answer, says Heilbrunn, is that the two men are drawn together by a shared set of liberal enemies and an almost pathological combativeness each learned growing up on the streets of Brooklyn.

Podhoretz has been quite honest about the various animosities he acquired in his youth. In his seminal 1963 essay "My Negro Problem—and Ours," he confesses to sometimes feeling toward African Americans "twinges of fear and ... resentment," as a result of being repeatedly beaten up as a kid by blacks. In one incident, he is confronted on the sidewalk by a "surly Negro boy named Quentin." The boy gives Podhoretz a violent shove. Podhoretz pushes him back—and is knocked unconscious by the bat-wielding Quentin.

Blacks are just one group Podhoretz grew up to resent. In his autobiography *Making It*, he seethes at the treatment he, the child of poor eastern European Jewish parents, was afforded by his fellow classmates at Columbia University—"the prep school boys ... the homosexuals with their supercilious disdain ... and the prissily bred middle-class Jews who thought me insufferably rude."

Such powerfully felt class and ethnic animosities are, of course, not uncommon. It's what makes many people—and much of American politics—tick. In an intellectual way, I get this. But on an emotional level, I confess, I mostly don't.

This may have to do with where and when I was raised—not on the mean streets of New York in the 1930s and '40s but in the mostly quiet suburbs of St. Louis in the 1960s and '70s. Such places weren't breeding grounds of ethnic and class hatreds, for the simple reason that there wasn't much evident ethnic and class diversity. I don't think I knew a single kid growing up whose family was truly poor, nor more than one or two who were truly rich. Most of my friends had Irish and German last names but were remarkably unaware of their ethnic heritage.

I was the exception in that regard. My family was Greek American, and you could not be around my parents for more than five minutes without their letting you know as much. Our ethnic pride was—and remains—unbounded, in part because our identity carries with it no painful, double-edged issues. We are not (with rare exceptions) a hated minority. Nor are we taught to hate others (except maybe Turks). Quite the contrary: Greeks are raised to believe that all people should be proud of who they are—but especially Greeks, considering the gifts we showered (and continue to shower) on civilization. There is no such thing as a self-hating Greek.

I had only one childhood experience that was remotely comparable to Podhoretz's, and it didn't have the same effect on me. In the 1960s, we lived in a ranch house in the suburb of Kirkwood. Such was the nature of segregation in those days that we were largely unaware that a few blocks away, on the other side of Kirkwood Road, was the all-black community of Meacham Park. In 1968, Meacham Park kids began to be bused to my school, Robinson Elementary. Overnight Robinson went from being all white to about 30 percent black. I was in the fourth grade at the time, old enough to be aware that my new classmates were different, but not old enough to care all that much. Indeed, except for their skin color, many of the African American kids dressed and behaved pretty much like we did.

But there was a group of black guys who were orders of magnitude tougher than the toughest white kids I knew. One day, I inadvertently knocked one of these boys, Maurice, off the monkey bars. Later, Maurice and his friend, a wiry kid named Lynn—whose left eye, I recall, had a pupil shaped like a star—found me in the bathroom and started shoving me against the wall. It was the scariest moment of my young life. Unlike Podhoretz, however, I felt no desire to shove back, and the boys left me alone after that.

The lure of more house for the money led my parents to move us to the exurbs the summer after fourth grade. It was a sensible decision, but personally I had no urge to leave. The only

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lesson I took away from the incident in the bathroom was that it is wise to give tough black guys a wide berth. Indeed, on balance, I rather liked being in a school that wasn't all white; it made things more interesting.

My childhood, then, was not one that left many chips on my shoulder. Or maybe it's just that I'm not by nature a very resentful person. Whatever the case, I do understand that class and ethnic resentments are for some the result of genuinely painful experiences. I just have very little patience for those who actively nurse those feelings—in themselves or others. And I really worry about the prospect of such people running the country.

Our best presidents have not been grudge nurturers, even when their childhoods were difficult. Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton both grew up in economically strained homes with abusive, alcoholic fathers. Both became famously sunny adults (though Reagan was not above playing on racial anger for political gain). Presidents who have carried around deep ethnic or class resentments, on the other hand, have often been undone by those feelings—think LBJ, Nixon, and now George W. Bush (whose class anger is directed inward, toward the East Coast elite into which he was born).

So, as we look at the field of candidates this year, which ones harbor uncomfortable levels of inner turmoil and resentment? I see none on the Democratic side. Hillary Clinton certainly holds right-wing operatives and the Washington press corps in minimal regard. But coming from Park Ridge, Illinois, a standard-issue inner-ring American suburb, she seems to be quite at ease with every rank of American. Barack Obama wrestled with some racial anger as a young man, but that struggle has produced a real uniter, not a divider. John Edwards works the class-outrage angle—and justifiably so, given the country's burgeoning inequality—but he doesn't really do class resentment.

On the GOP side, there's Mike Huckabee, who seems emotionally balanced; Mitt Romney, who only fakes resentment; and John McCain, whose caustic bent seems to derive more from a hot temper than any broader enmity. The only major candidate clearly moved by gut-level tribal loyalties and resentments is Rudy Giuliani. That, I think, is why so many people find the thought of him in the Oval Office so scary.

Any successful politician needs to maintain a healthy awareness of the ethnic, race, and class insecurities that bedevil this great country. When liberals in the past let their awareness slip, they did long-term damage to their own cause—the era of busing that my family lived through being a prime example.

But the real danger today is not liberals ignoring the voters' resentments but conservatives playing to them. Rudy Giuliani is the most worrisome because he shares those resentments. But all the GOP candidates, even those with reasonably healthy psyches, are having to tailor their words and positions to a Republican Party base that is increasingly like Norman Podhoretz—belligerently fearful and aggrieved and thereby prone to horrible judgment. This country can't afford another four years with a president who sees his job as serving the psychic needs of these people. WM

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Boring Bob?

I read Bob Herbert ("Why Is Bob Herbert Boring?" by T. A. Frank, October). He is one of my favorite columnists. I've found his analysis to be reliable, and I respect the fact that he addresses problems that his more popular peers often ignore. And he does it without glitz—something else I appreciate.

You called attention to a number of factors that may stand in the way of his receiving more recognition. I'd like to add two: 1) His writing calls attention to the people he covers rather than to himself. 2) He is African American.

Lynne Rustad
Via e-mail

Sometimes, I've read a Bob Herbert column and thought: This was a slam-dunk subject. He could have had the world in tears, reaching into their pockets, writing their representatives, taking to the streets. But he didn't.

Wendy Lestina
Via e-mail

Yay, VA

Philip Longman's article ("Best Care Everywhere," October) should qualify him to become the new health care czar. I have worked in a VA medical center for the thirty years. I have also worked in Air Force hospitals, university hospitals, private hospitals, state hospitals, and clinics. Alas, I doubt the special interest groups will ever allow his plan to happen.

John Burden
Via e-mail

About Schmitt

Maybe it's unrealistic to expect reviewers to read your whole book ("Divide and Concur," by Mark Schmitt, November), but it really shouldn't be too much to expect them to get past page thirteen.

Schmitt's central complaint is that my book "locates the explanation for all of America's problems in the fact that both major political parties equally fail" to pursue reasonable compromise. Really? Here's what's on page thirteen: "[T]he Republican Party has contributed more than the Democrats to the rising cycle of polarization in American politics."

Later, I note that "Democrats probably would find it easier than Republicans to offer a policy agenda aimed at national reconciliation." Yes, I argue that Democrats pursued a more polarizing course in their response to Bush than they did under Clinton (though I say "that may have been a rational, even inevitable, response" to the environment Bush created). But I also state that because Democrats represent a more ideologically diverse coalition, they "possess a greater incentive than Republicans to reach out beyond their ideological vanguard and usually face somewhat less resistance when they do."

What I don't accept is Schmitt's simplistic equation that all Democrats are flexible, responsible, and reasonable and Republicans the opposite. Since I don't, he misleadingly argues I see no differences in the two parties' contribution to hyper-partisanship.

Schmitt mischaracterizes me when he says I celebrate "the age of bargaining"—the period of greater bipartisan cooperation after World War II. There were positive aspects of that system. But it also had fundamental flaws that I detailed: a tendency toward "incremental, not revolutionary, reform"; a silencing of impassioned voices; and the fact that it "safeguarded a regime of brutal state-sponsored segregation." I don't think I could have been more unequivocal when I wrote that "the age of bargaining is not a political system that anyone would seek to resurrect today."

Similarly, Schmitt suggests that I downplay the role of Bush and the Republican Congress in accelerating polarization since 2000. Again: really? The chapter titles hint at the book's conclusions: "The President of Half of America" and "The 51 Per Cent Solution." I also wrote, "Only confrontation could satisfy many on the right, because consensus could never achieve change of the magnitude they desired. In Bush they found a leader who shared that conviction and who demonstrated, over and again, that in service of his goals he was willing to sharply divide the Congress and the country." Since Schmitt didn't recount my verdict on that strategy, here it is: "The overriding lesson for both parties from the Bush attempt to profit from polarization is that there remains no way to achieve lasting political power in a nation as diverse as America without assembling a broad coalition."

Schmitt likes the way the parties have evolved and believes Democrats can thrive in this environment. That's his right: I point out that one of the benefits of our new system is that it offers voters "clear, sharp choices" and inspires engagement. But in our divided country, the party that tries to represent the broadest range of interests remains the one most likely to serve both the national interest and its own partisan interest.

Ronald Brownstein
Via e-mail

Mark Schmitt responds:

Despite my doubts that Ron Brownstein read my review as carefully as I read his book, I will comment on an area of agreement rather than pick at a disagreement: Brownstein concludes that "the

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party that tries to represent and harmonize the broadest range of interests remains the one most likely to serve ... the national interest." I entirely agree. As I wrote, it is the Democratic Party that—for the moment, and certainly not always—seems to "represent and harmonize the broadest range of interests." I say that based on Brownstein's own view of the national interest—on immigration, deficit reduction, and health care.

The caveats Brownstein cites respond to a criticism I did not make. Nowhere did I criticize the book as holding Democrats and Republicans equally responsible for polarization. Rather, I argued that polarized parties are an irreversible fact of political history, and that the "Age of Bargaining" (which, he says, "would well serve the nation again") was the anomaly, a weird legacy of the Civil War and reconstruction. Where Brownstein and I disagree is on whether the explanation for our nation's failure to achieve the policy outcomes that he considers desirable lies in the fact of polarization, or in the fact that people who disagree with his preferred policies have been in power. At any rate, his caveats interrupt but don't alter the relentless and unconvincing parallelism of his argument (for example, the chapter he cites on the Republicans entitled "The 51 Per Cent Solution" is paired with one castigating the liberal netroots).

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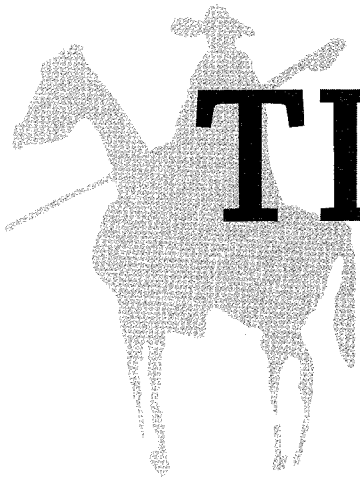

TILTING at windmills

By Charles Peters

I'm sure I saw that anthrax around here somewhere ...

I know you won't believe it, but this is true: Major General George Weightman, who was in command of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center at the time the *Washington Post* uncovered the scandalous treatment of some of its wounded, has been assigned to command Fort Detrick, Maryland, where the Army does biological weapons research. Weightman had been in command of Walter Reed for six months when the *Post* story appeared, yet he did not have a clue about what it reported. If he demonstrates a similar gift for not knowing what's going on down below at Fort Detrick, terrorists could make off with a pound or two of anthrax and dangerous biological agents could leak into Maryland's groundwater or poison its air, all to the general's surprise.

Us vs. them fund-raising

Ricochet, a new book by Richard Feldman, a former lobbyist for the National Rifle Association, describes an important fact about the NRA that also applies to other K Street lobbies. They exacerbate the fears of their members or clients in order to raise money that pays for the lobbyists' salaries. "Drawing nice clean lines between 'us' and 'them' to battle over makes for far more successful direct mail solicitations than actually solving problems," observes Feldman.

Washington's secret

This is another version of what I call the Washington equation: make-believe equals survival. Deep in every bureaucrat's DNA is an awareness that if his agency actually solves the problem it is supposed to deal with, his agency would cease to exist, and he would be out of a job. It is, as Feldman says of the NRA, "better to fight than win."

Concede this

Feldman got into trouble with his former bosses at the NRA when he helped the Clinton administration persuade gun manufacturers to agree to voluntarily place locks on handguns. His NRA bosses hated the idea of even a voluntary standard on gun manufacturers.

A similar reaction to a voluntary regulation has recently come from some trade associations representing builders. The regulation in question, intended to protect workers from repetitive-motion injuries, was adopted by the American National Standards Institute, which involves business and labor as well as safety professionals in developing its rules.

Since the standard is totally voluntary, why are the trade associations against it? The answer is that, like the NRA, they don't want to make any concessions. As Frank Burg, a safety expert, tells the *Washington Post*'s Cindy Skrzycki, they will "do whatever they can to stop an ergonomics standard."

Earn a Lott

Trent Lott is resigning from the Senate "to make some money" after serving only one year of the term to which he was last elected. This is an example of how the greed that dominates Wall Street has spread to Capitol Hill.

Even Robert Novak, not exactly a harsh critic of the GOP, thinks so. He reports that Lott's annual income from his Senate salary, investments, and other sources is $289,710, and that his net worth is between $1.4 million and $2 million. Not exactly food-stamp territory. But as Novak observes, "for many in today's Congress, big money trumps public service."

> Crediting General Petraeus with his achievement does not mean we have to change our minds that the war was a bad idea.

Not my problem

If you think the CIA's failure to notify the FBI that two of the 9/11 terrorists had arrived in the United States was an isolated incident, or only indicative of a lack of cooperation between those two

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agencies, consider a report made by the Bureau of Land Management inspectors before the Crandall Canyon mine disaster in Utah.

The inspector, Stephen Falk, warned that attempting to remove coal from the pillars that held up the mine roof would "result in hazardous mining conditions such as pillar bursts and roof falls," which is, of course, exactly what happened last August. The Bureau of Land Management, however, chose not to show the report to the Labor Department's Mine Safety and Health Administration until after the disaster. No one even thought to do so. After all, the mine's safety wasn't their responsibility.

Clueless

Bob Drogin, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, in his new book *Curveball*, tells the story of the CIA being duped by the former Baghdad taxi driver with that code name who invented the story of Saddam's mobile biological weapons labs. But the tale Drogin recounts is redeemed by at least one CIA analyst, called Margaret, who had the sense to see that Curveball was a phony. Similarly, the *Washington Post's* David Ignatius recently praised the CIA analyst who wrote two reports early in 2003 that accurately predicted the post-invasion chaos in Iraq. But, with the exception of the two analysts and a handful of other success stories, the CIA's record is far from impressive.

Indeed, Ignatius himself, in his new spy novel, *Body of Lies*, confirms the picture of ineptitude depicted by Drogin and Tim Weiner's *Legacy of Ashes*, concluding that even though his CIA hero is a good guy, "much of the agency is laughably incompetent."

Factual fiction

Speaking of spy novels that tell important truths, if you haven't read Richard North Patterson's *Exile*, be sure to do so. It has the most complete and sympathetic description I've encountered of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides to their long and bitter dispute. And speaking of fictional depictions of bitter antagonisms, the best I've seen on the struggle between pro-choicers and pro-lifers is a movie from 1996 called *Citizen Ruth*, which stars that marvelous actress Laura Dern and is also, by the way, very, very funny.

What liberals can't see about the surge

And while we're on the subject of refusing to see the other side, I see a danger that my fellow antiwar liberals will fall into another rigidity—being so antiwar that they are afraid to acknowledge facts that may not fit their case. I recently wrote a column for *Newsweek* bemoaning the failure of many liberals to acknowledge that the situation in Iraq is much improved since last spring. Crediting General Petraeus with his accomplishment does not mean we have to change our minds that the war was a bad idea and that the subsequent occupation has killed far too many Americans and Iraqi civilians. But it does mean that we should face the future implications of General Petraeus's success.

Among those implications is at least one that liberals should love. By talking to Sunni tribal leaders who had been shooting at us, Petraeus was able to persuade them to stop killing our soldiers and go after al-Qaeda instead. We should be eager to emphasize this lesson to the Bush administration, which desperately needs to learn that talking to our enemies might just be a good idea.

When Petraeus stumbled

While General Petraeus seems to be doing well now, and certainly performed admirably when he was in charge of the occupation of Mosul in 2003 and early 2004, there is an intervening period in his career that cries for critical examination.

He was in charge of training the Iraqi army in 2004 and 2005, a role in which he does not seem to have performed impressively. Indeed, Congress and the media need to investigate why we so totally screwed up training the Iraqi army and police.

The *New York Times* has taken a first step with an article describing how "the American military lost track of some 190,000 pistols and automatic rifles supplied by the United States to Iraq's security forces in 2004 and 2005." The article describes an Iraqi businessman who was given a contract to supply weapons to Iraqi police cadets from the Baghdad Police Academy armory. But "he also turned the armory into his own private arms bazaar," the *Times* writes, "selling AK-47 assault rifles, Glock pistols and heavy machine guns to anyone with cash in hand."

School for scandal

One of the dirty little secrets of the nonprofit world, including foundations and universities, is how little of their endowment many of them spend each year. Some foundations are required by the IRS to spend 5 percent of their endowment annually. But other nonprofits, including universities, face no such requirement. The average expenditure from college endowments is 4.6 percent, according to the National Association of College and University Business Managers. Amherst spent exactly that percentage for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2006, but its endowment grew by 15.8 percent the same year, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Even the foundations that have to spend 5 percent can count the generous salaries they give their executives as part of that amount. And, most galling of all, they can also include the cost of mailing those letters in which they plead the direst need for you to send your contribution today. What I fear is true is that many of these supposed do-gooders are primarily concerned not with doing good, but with ensuring the continuing existence of the organization that pays their salaries.

Where would Jesus jet?

You've probably heard about those six celebrity preachers Senator Charles Grassley is investigating for abusing their tax exempt status—financing their lavish lifestyles with the contributions of believers who often sacrifice to squeeze the money from their modest family budgets. And now the Associated Press has identified two other conspicuous offenders.

They are Oral Roberts and his son Richard. A former regent of Oral Roberts

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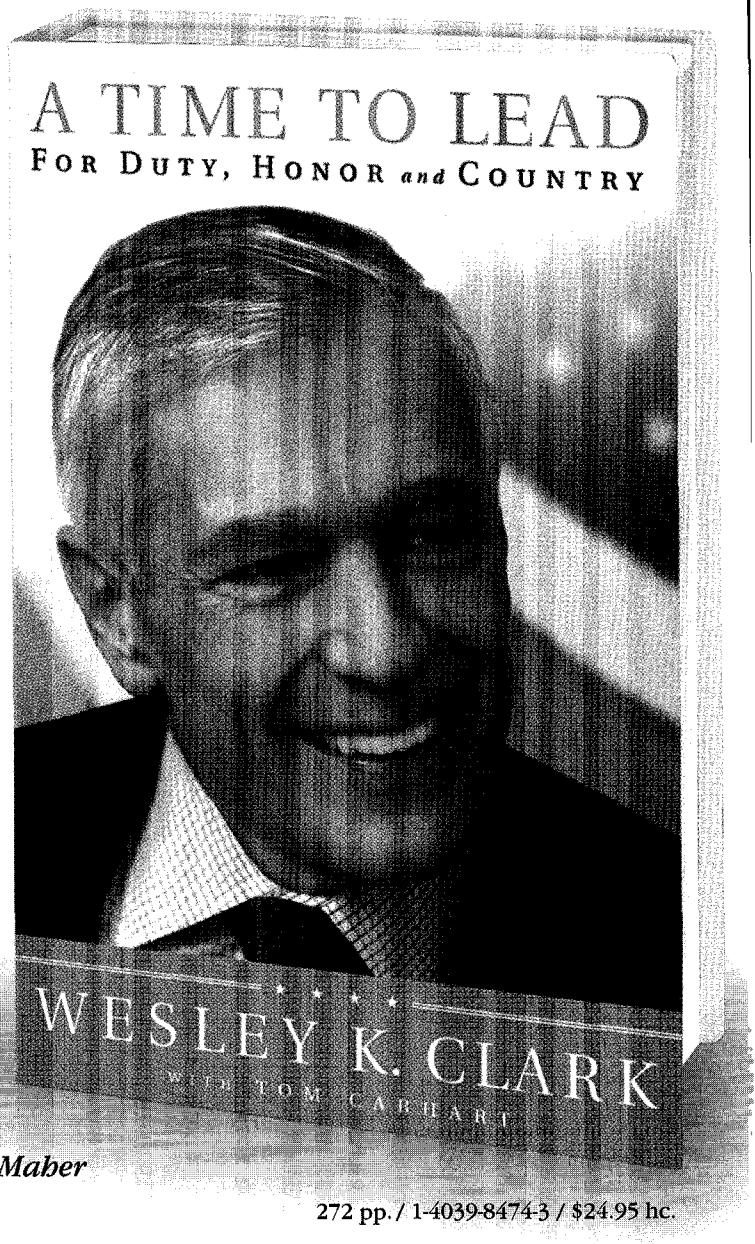
SOME ARE CALLED TO LEAD



"Anyone interested in leadership or improving their own lives should read this book."
—President Bill Clinton

"In the dialogue about America's role in the world, Wesley Clark's voice needs to be heard."
—Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House

"Clark's story is a timely reminder that the best way to be tough in the twenty-first century is to be very, very smart."
—Bill Maher, Host of *Real Time with Bill Maher*

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From his rough childhood in segregated Arkansas, through the horrors he faced in Vietnam and the difficulties of negotiating peace and rebuilding national security after the Cold War, General Clark often found himself at the forefront of American policy making, both at home and abroad. It is the sum of these experiences that inform his ideas about the current state of our nation, the direction in which we are headed, and what we should hope to achieve.

ich with vivid battle scenes, poignant personal anecdotes, and bold recommendations for change, *A Time to Lead* draws on eneral Clark's many life lessons to address the threats against us, to reexamine how our actions affect our place on the world age, and to get back to the ideals and values that once made it possible for ordinary Americans to live the American Dream.

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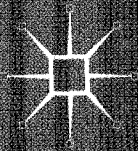

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University who resigned in disgust told the AP that "the board practically 'rubberstamped' the use of millions in endowment money to buy a Beverly Hills property so that Oral Roberts could have a West Coast office and house," with, by the way, a country club membership included. The former regent also said that Richard Roberts "once took an ORU regent and their wives to the South Pacific on a university jet just to get away for a few days."

A pending lawsuit alleges that the university paid for a $39,000 shopping bill at just one store for Richard Roberts's wife, a "$29,411 senior trip to the Bahamas on a university jet for one of the Roberts daughters, and a stable of horses for the Roberts children."

Are you beginning to suspect that there might be a need for a major investigation, not just of these churches but of what goes on behind the respectable facade of nonprofits in general?

> There is nothing that Hillary has done in the Senate that compares in courage and effectiveness to Obama's accomplishments in the Illinois legislature.

Prime reporting, sub-prime timing

Back in 1986, this magazine warned in an article by Steven Waldman of the danger presented by inflated real estate appraisals. A few years later these appraisals proved to be a major factor in the savings-and-loan scandal. Now inflated appraisals are back, playing a starring role in the sub-prime debacle. Bank officials pressure appraisers to inflate the value of a house in order to increase the amount of the loan. A national survey of appraisers in 2006, according to Kenneth Harney of the *Washington Post*, reveals "that nine of 10 appraisers said they had recently been intimidated or otherwise pressured to raise valuations on homes." And far too many of them agreed, in the words of one appraisal company executive, to "roll over and just do it."

It was enterprising of Harney to dig up the 2006 survey. But it would have been better if he had done so when it came out, and even better if he and other journalists were to have reported a similar survey in 2003, which found 55 percent of appraisers being pressured. That kind of reporting might have actually prevented the sub-prime crisis.

The rich, the poor, and the funny money

Profits from the financial sector "account for 31 percent of total United States corporate earnings," reports Gretchen Morgenson in the *New York Times*, "up from 20 percent in 1990 and 8 percent in 1950." When you contemplate all the chicanery revealed by the sub-prime and other Wall Street scandals, aren't you a bit concerned about the soundness of our economy?

Another sign that there's something deeply unhealthy about the economy was pointed out by Warren Buffet when he testified before the Senate Finance Committee: the estate tax. He said, according to Bloomberg News, that tax laws over the last twenty years have benefited the super-rich, "including me, in a huge way."

During that time, average Americans went exactly nowhere on the economic scale: they've been on a treadmill, while the super-rich have been on a spaceship.

Capital ideas

Speaking of the gap between the rich and everyone else, here are two recent books I admire—and you won't find it hard to guess why I like them when you read the full titles and subtitles. One is *The Conservatives Have No Clothes: Why Right-Wing Ideas Keep Failing*, by Greg Anrig. The other is *Free Lunch: How the Wealthiest Americans Enrich Themselves at Government Expense (and Stick You With the Bill)*, by David Cay Johnston, in which even my favorite rich guy, Warren Buffet, does not escape unscathed.

We'll miss the great carbon monoxide flavor

Richard Nixon learned the hard way that congressional investigations can have impact. Even the threat of one can sometimes help. Consider the use of carbon monoxide to keep meat "looking red and fresh." The technique definitely helps sales, and was approved by the FDA as "generally recognized as safe." There's one little problem, however, that caused the European Union to ban the practice: coloring meat "can mask visual evidence of spoilage."

Representatives John Dingell and Bart Stupak of the House Energy and Commerce Committee sent letters to major food-store chains and processors asking how, in the words of the *Washington Post*'s Rick Weiss, "the companies are ensuring that customers are not being fooled about freshness." Several of the biggest decided to fold. Giant Food and Stop & Shop said they would stop buying colored meat, and Tyson Foods, a food processor, announced that it would abandon the practice.

Hard lessons from Head Start

Congress recently passed a bill to expand Head Start containing a "reform" that strikes me as pathetic. It requires at least half of the Head Start teachers to have a bachelor's degree in education, but postpones the effective date of the requirement until 2013.

The tragedy of Head Start from its inception is that a great idea was too often ruined by too many incompetent and marginal teachers. Behind the problem was an insistence by community-action theorists of the 1960s that Head Start instructors must come from "the community." If the community was largely uneducated, or the victim of third-rate schools, it wasn't likely to provide the best-qualified teachers. Doing anything about the problem has been hampered by the fact that it might be interpreted as bigotry because a good many of the communities are black.

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He thought she must have won the lottery

The District of Columbia's chief financial officer, Natwar M. Gandhi, appears to be another subscriber to the style of management favored by General Weightman. His suspicions were not aroused when Harriette Walters, an employee of his, was making $62,000 to $81,000 from 2004 to 2007 while she was driving a Mercedes-Benz, wearing a mink coat, designer suits, and carrying a different Chanel handbag practically every day. If he had been even slightly suspicious, he would have discovered that she had spent $1.4 million at Neiman Marcus—just one of the different stores she frequented—and that she had managed to deposit $8 million in the bank and buy houses worth $2.3 million.

How had she acquired these funds? She and a colleague had bilked Gandhi's office of at least $40 million in phony tax refunds that Gandhi had failed to notice, although auditors had pointed out that there were, to put it gently, an unusually high amount of refunds being paid by the office. But just as General Weightman has been rewarded with a promotion, Gandhi has been cited by *Governing* magazine as one of the top nine public officials in the country.

Fire power

We have a problem in Washington, where identifying incompetent bureaucrats is often met with charges of racism. The reality is that the majority of the city's employees are black, so a lot of the incompetents are black. This incompetence is probably worst at the administrative offices in D.C., where it is hard to find anyone who knows what he or she is doing.

Michelle Rhee, the new head of the D.C. school system, is trying to get authority to fire those who need to be fired. Predictably, some of the politicians are resisting.

A few weeks ago I was watching a city council meeting on television—okay, I know this proves I'm a masochist—as Rhee explained to the council that she only wanted the same authority they had to hire and fire their staff. Some council members bristled. She had them. Instead of admitting it, however, they became angry. It is still uncertain whether she will get the authority she needs.

In the meantime, administrative chaos continues in the D.C. schools. Consider student records and schedules. "Students, parents, and teachers," reports Lonnae O'Neal Parker of the *Washington Post*, "say kids frequently have been put in classes they have already taken, scheduled for two classes at the same time and not scheduled for classes they need."

One way to save insurgents the trouble

I've been meaning to congratulate *Time*'s Mark Thompson for his investigative reporting on the U.S. military. In June, he cowrote an analysis of how Iraq had worn the Army out. And in October, he published a thorough expose of the V-22 Osprey, the hybrid helicopter-plane whose many defects the Marines have resolutely refused to face. Thompson's headline told the story: "It's unsafe. It can't shoot straight. It's already cost thirty lives and $20 billion. And now it's headed for Iraq."

Obama vs. Huckabee

The primaries are about to start. And as bunched up as they are, we could easily have nominees by the time our next issue appears. If there were more space between the primaries, I'm convinced Obama would be the Democratic nominee, and Huckabee the Republican.

I believe Obama would win because as voters get to know him, they will recognize that he is the only presidential candidate who has the potential for greatness.

As for Huckabee, it's not that I agree with him on most issues, it's simply that he and McCain come across as the only human beings among the Republican candidates. And McCain is ruled out by the hostility of the Republican right, which dominates the primaries.

But since this will be a short primary season, I fear that Obama and Huckabee will fall to more famous candidates. As for the general election, I think it will be a full-blown disaster if the Republicans win. On the other hand, I think that all the Democrats would make decent presidents.

Driving me crazy

Unlike most observers, I thought Obama and Clinton were at their best when they were supposed to have flubbed a question about driver's licenses for illegal aliens—Hillary in Philadelphia, and Barack in Las Vegas. What they were doing in each case was trying to face the complexity of a very difficult problem, and to me they deserved great credit for doing so. Unfortunately, in Las Vegas Hillary took the politically expedient course of saying a flat no.

I think she also took the politically expedient course on the Social Security tax. When Obama said he would raise the current cap that prevents people from being taxed on income over $97,500, Clinton said she refused to "fix the problem of Social Security on the backs of middle-class families and seniors." When Obama replied that "only 6 percent of Americans make more than $97,500 a year," Clinton replied, "There are people who would find that [tax] burdensome ... [like] firefighters ... school supervisors."

> Deep in every bureaucrat's DNA is an awareness that if his agency actually solves the problem it is supposed to deal with, he would be out of a job.

I'm sure that not more than a handful of American firefighters make more than $97,500. Even in New York City, where public employee salaries are high, a firefighter with five years of experience makes only $68,475. And even with overtime and holiday work, that sum can only rise to $86,518, according to the *Washington Post*'s Joel Achenbach.

Just what Clinton meant by the school supervisors remains unclear, but again, only a handful of public school

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employees make over $97,500. The exception is top school superintendents, who *are* often well paid.

What fascinates me is that although Obama clearly seemed to have won the point, few commentators noted the fact that he had, and almost all of them said that Hillary had won the debate. This is, I think, a tribute to the very large percentage of the media elite who make more than $97,500 a year.

Fortress Hillary

As for Hillary Clinton, there is of course much to admire. But what has troubled me the most since her arrival at the White House is her hostility to the press and what it means. (The best account I've seen of Hillary's problems with the press is in Sally Bedell Smith's *For Love of Politics*.) It was Hillary who ordered the door to the press room shut to cut off reporters' access to the rest of the West Wing. It was Hillary who, in the winter of 1993 and 1994, exploited Bill's guilt over Troopergate to refuse to give the Whitewater papers to the press, although virtually the entire White House staff urged her to do so. And it is Hillary who has displayed a disdain for holding press conferences second only to George W. Bush's.

By contrast, Franklin Roosevelt, the greatest president of the twentieth century, and John F. Kennedy, the president who showed during the Cuban missile crisis that he would have been great, loved talking to reporters. They were sufficiently open and unafraid to hold press conferences more frequently than any other president. We need a president who, like them, will not fear being questioned but will instead delight in it.

Ode to Obama

In addition to believing that Obama has the potential to be great, there are two other reasons I support him. Earlier this year I quoted a Democratic senator who told me that Obama was the only candidate who had even a remote chance of doing something about the growing hatred of the United States by Muslims. Andrew Sullivan makes this point eloquently in the December issue of the *Atlantic*.

My other reason for supporting Obama, as some of you will remember, comes from my own experience in the state legislature in West Virginia, where a substantial number of my colleagues shared a distaste for reform similar to that encountered by Obama in Illinois. So I have some idea of the skill and effort it took for him to get a tough ethics bill enacted. Even more impressive was his bill requiring the videotaping of murder confessions. This effectively put an end to the practice of coerced confessions that led to the execution of far too many innocents in the State of Illinois. There is nothing that Hillary Clinton has done in the Senate that compares in terms of demonstrating both courage and effectiveness to that achievement. WM

Charles Peters is the founding editor of the *Washington Monthly* and the president of Understanding Government, a nonprofit dedicated to better government through better reporting.

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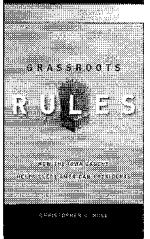

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THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES

The Unbearable Inanity of Tim Russert

By Matthew Yglesias

On May 27, Democratic presidential candidate Bill Richardson appeared on *Meet the Press* hoping, no doubt, to get a question about Iraq policy. Richardson was advocating the complete withdrawal of all U.S. forces, an important policy distinction at a time when his rivals all favored retaining a substantial "residual" presence in Iraq. Soon enough, the host of the show, Tim Russert, turned to the topic:

> *On your Web site you say this: "Troops out in '07. We should get our troops out of Iraq this year. No residual forces left behind. We must remove all of our troops. There should be no residual U.S. forces left in Iraq." Now, I want to compare that to what you said in your book,* Between Worlds, *which just came out about eighteen months ago. You write this: "At this point ... we must see this mission through. We mustn't stay in Iraq past the point where the new government asks us to leave, but neither can we unilaterally pull out before the Iraqis have achieved control over their own internal security. We owe them the opportunity to make their democracy work. We must not undermine their efforts now." That's exactly what you're doing, undermining their efforts.*

Russert apparently meant this as a question. For some reason, we were supposed to be astonished that Richardson's view of what would be good policy in the spring of 2007 wasn't the same as his view of what would have been good policy in the winter of 2005. One imagines FDR getting a question about how he could favor the Normandy landings when he'd refused entreaties for operations in France just eighteen months earlier. *"Now, I want to compare this invasion of France to what you said in your fireside chat in late 1942."*

Still, Richardson made what he could of the opportunity, answering that things in Iraq had changed. "There's a civil war, there's sectarian conflict," he said. "I believe we must withdraw all our troops by the end of this calendar year with no residual forces because our troops today are a target." Richardson then began to explain his reasoning, "We are viewed—," only to be interrupted by Russert, who came up with, "To be sure—that's totally contrary to what you wrote in your book."

If it's Sunday, it's *Meet the Press*, where newsmakers go to be grilled by one of television news's most respected figures. If moments like the above exchange between Russert and Richardson seem unhelpful—even ridiculous—to you, rest assured that Washington thinks otherwise. Tim Russert, it is said, is tough—supertough—and wily, too, like a knuckleball pitcher. As Jim Geraghty put it, "Every once in a while a Washington media institution really does matter, and *Meet the Press* is one of them." Why? "Because Tim Russert, without commercial interruption, will throw hardballs and curveballs for a solid half hour, and standard delaying tactics won't work." So *Meet the Press* thrives, delighting precisely the sort of person who doesn't realize that a hardball is a kind of ball whereas a curveball is a kind of pitch.

Actually, the balls Russert favors may be hard, but the pitches he throws aren't curveballs, which go someplace useful. They're sillyballs, which go somewhere pointless. Russert has created a strike zone of his own where toughness meets irrelevance. John McCain entered the zone last May, when he went on the show and repeatedly asserted that the Bush tax cuts had increased the federal government's revenue. Hearing this, a tough but conscientious journalist might have pointed out that this is demonstrably false. Russert, however, reached for a trusty hardball and sent it sailing. McCain, he pointed out, was now *supporting* extending the very same Bush tax cuts that he had once *opposed*.

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Well, yes, but this was a bit like asking someone who says the world is flat why he used to say the earth was round. The contradiction Russert pointed out was real—but hardly central. In fact, if tax cuts actually *had* increased revenues, then McCain's change of heart would have been perfectly logical. The real problem was that McCain's theory of the relationship between tax rates and revenue *wasn't true*. In Russertland, though, as long as you acknowledge the contradiction, the questioner is satisfied. *"You say the world is flat, but just three years ago you said it was round." "You know, Tim, yes, I used to say the world was round, but times change, and that's why I support the Bush administration's bill to construct a restraining wall to prevent ships from sailing over the edge of the sea."* And so on.

Since I've complained that Russert unfairly cut off Richardson while giving McCain a backhanded sort of pass, you might suspect I'm accusing Russert of partiality. Not at all. Although *Meet the Press* may have a weakness for right-leaning guest panels (see Paul Waldman, "John Fund Again?" March 2006 *Washington Monthly*), the unbearable inanity of Russert transcends partisanship. It's an equal-opportunity bias against anyone with anything substantive to say.

Ask Fred Thompson, who appeared on the November 4 episode, in which Russert confronted him with the following press report: "At a campaign stop in South Carolina Wednesday, Fred Thompson said that the Iraqi insurgency is made up of a 'bunch of kids with improvised explosive devices,' and suggested that the appearance of losing to such an enemy would harm U.S. national security." Rather than take on Thompson's argument that allowing the insurgency to drive the United States out of Iraq would be too dangerous, Russert chose to focus on the word "kids" and accuse Thompson of trivializing the insurgency. That led to this exchange:

> *MR. THOMPSON: Yeah. Well, that's, that's not exactly what I said. I mean, I don't minimize the fact that, that we've got terrorists coming in from Syria, from, from Iraq—I mean from Iran and, and other places, in Saudi Arabia, pouring in there. We, we have Sunni-Shia violence; there's no question about that. I've never disputed that. Al-Qaeda, although I think they're back on their heels now, still strong there, there's no question.*
>
> *MR. RUSSERT: But you should not trivialize ...*
>
> *MR. THOMPSON: And I said ...*
>
> *MR. RUSSERT: You shouldn't trivialize [them] as a bunch of kids.*

After all, what about the insurgent thirty-somethings? This is a helpful example of how a journalist can be useless to all parties. If you're a hawk and think Thompson was making a fundamentally sound point, then Russert, by going off on a trivial tangent, was undermining it unfairly. If you're a dove and think Thompson had a fundamentally unsound point, then Russert, by going off on a trivial tangent, was failing to undermine it properly. But just because you're pissing off both sides doesn't mean you're doing anything right. Maybe you're just being an all-around clown. Whoosh—into the strike zone.

Unfortunately, Russert's brand of journalism, rather than being ghettoized as a pointless or perverse form of entertainment—like shoulder self-dislocation or cat surfing—has immense influence. Russert is frequently a debate moderator during high-profile political races. His strengths were on full display during a Democratic debate on October 30, when Russert focused intensely on the question of whether illegal immigrants should have driver's licenses. It's true, of course, that some symbolic yes-or-no answers really do reveal something useful. But sometimes they don't. Driver's licenses don't fall under federal jurisdiction, none of the candidates were proposing any federal legislation to change that fact, and any state's driver's license policy is shaped in response to our dysfunctional national immigration policy. (In theory, a governor who supported building a border fence might nevertheless favor licensing illegal immigrants because they are already here.) In short, a yes-or-no answer on this issue would genuinely be misleading. But Russertism doesn't care about that. *"Do you consider drowning preferable to stoning? Yes or no?" "Well, Tim, the problem is with capital punishment." "Yes or no?"*

To say that such exercises offer *no* information would be unfair. But the information is purely meta. Viewers watch a candidate getting grilled by Russert not to assess the candidate's views but to assess his or her *ability to withstand the grilling*. And, when this sort of toughness and sparring becomes its own reward, the vacuity of the questioning is almost guaranteed. After all, if you asked a politician a serious, important question and got a perfectly good answer, then maybe, for a moment, you couldn't be tough. Instead, Russert relies on his crutch of confronting politicians with allegedly contradictory statements they've made—to highly monotonous effect.

Worse, Russert has a legion of imitators. At the same debate in which Russert harangued Democrats about driver's licenses for illegal immigrants, audience member LaShannon Spencer came up with an intriguingly open-ended request for candidates to talk about the qualities they would look for in Supreme Court appointments. However, CNN's Suzanne Malveaux swiftly transformed this into a clichéd question about "whether or not you would require your nominees to support abortion rights," even though everyone knows all the candidates are pro-choice. Under Russertism, that's a better question, because it's more likely to cause someone to stumble.

And that's really the game here. Russert's goal isn't to inform his audience. He's there to "make news"—to get his guest to say something embarrassing that lands in the next day's papers or on the *NBC Nightly News*. The politicians, in turn, go on the show determined *not* to make news. And why do they bother? Because, as Geraghty has noted, it's a rite of passage, and any politician too chicken to play Russert's inane games would never garner the respect of the political class. And then, seven days later, it all happens again like clockwork. If it's Sunday, it's *Meet the Press*. WM

Matthew Yglesias is an associate editor of the *Atlantic*. His first book, *Heads in the Sand*, will be published by John Wiley & Sons in April.

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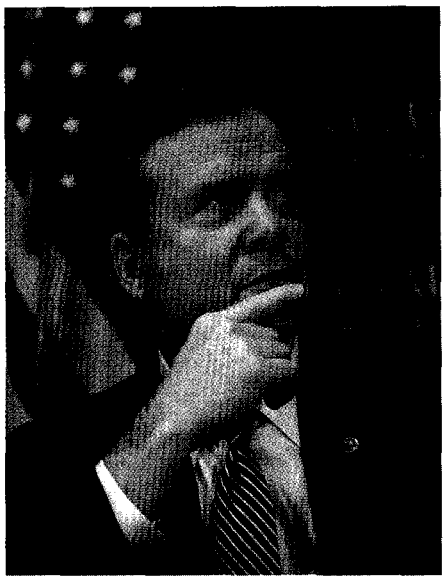
A Q&A With Jim Webb

The senator sounds off on prison reform, life on Capitol Hill, and avoiding fights in bars.

By David Francis



Mannie Garcia/AFP/Getty Images

WM: Almost a year after your election, do you feel that the ideas about economic fairness you raised on the campaign trail continue to resonate?

JW: When I ran in 2006, the war and George Allen—his own little journey—overwhelmed the news. But in every single speech, I talked about economic fairness and executive compensation. I think these economic issues are sticking. Have you looked at the results of this year's Virginia state elections? Democrats ran on competence, as the people who know how to lead and solve economic problems. We picked up four seats, in solidly Republican districts.

WM: It feels like we're on an economic ledge, with a lot of problems in the housing market, growing income disparities, the impact of globalization and outsourcing. Is there anything you can do in Washington?

JW: There are certain things. First, raise the public consciousness about what is going on. Before the last election, the populist caucus in the Senate consisted of Byron Dorgan [*laughs*]. Now, probably six of the nine Democrats elected in 2006 feel strongly about issues of economic fairness.

One way to get things done is to look closely at tax policies. For instance, current policies that allow hedge-fund managers to designate their incomes as "capital gains," and get a reduced tax rate. Another way is to look at trade pacts. In none of the early trade pacts did we have provisions taking care of the American worker. Now we're putting them in.

There are a lot of votes I've taken where 30 percent of what I've voted for I didn't like. But 70 percent I had some agreement with. That's the most frustrating part, in terms of bringing a writer's sort of intellectual discipline to the table.

WM: How have you made the transition from a career in writing and journalism to working on the other side as a politician?

JW: When you write, you deal in complexities. You can render the complexities. In a job like this, where you vote, the vote is an absolute. Even if you believe in something 50.1 percent of the way, you have to vote one way or the other.

My intellectual growth really was as a writer, taking enormously complex issues and thinking about them, parsing them, and laying them out—sometimes in the human drama of a novel, and sometimes in straight-up essays.

I'm still trying to do that when I'm preparing to vote. I talk about the complexities on the Senate floor. Before complicated votes, I'll bring my staff in and let them debate; people have different points of view. I'll argue with them, think it through, and then I go vote. You have to come to some sort of conclusion.

WM: Do you find yourself becoming frustrated with the way things in Washington work?

JW: I think the frustration with long lead times that many new senators feel is not so foreign to me, because I know how long it takes to write a book [*laughs*]. You can't get something done in a week in Washington, but that part doesn't really bother me.

The biggest frustration for me is in terms of personal freedom. When I'm a writer, I control my own schedule. Usually I write well into the afternoon, then I go work out and eat lunch around 3 o'clock. And if I have reason to pick up and go to Bangkok, I go to Bangkok.

But in Washington, you're totally a prisoner. Particularly as a senator or a congressman, compared to the staff. I can't even meet someone for lunch at Thai Shirlington [in the Virginia suburbs], because I don't know when the Senate will call a vote. Being chained to the place took some getting used to.

We go full blast up here. I can see how people would be frustrated, but I don't see how anybody could be bored. There are just too many things to do if you want to do them.

WM: Where do you want to take the debate?

JW: I have four or five what I call trajectory issues, issues that aren't going to be resolved in one year. I have people working full-time on those issues—trade, criminal justice, worker rights, the fairness of the tax code. These issues won't be solved by just one bill. We're gonna be working on them full-time.

WM: You've talked about how Republicans have prevented economic issues from becoming a unifier across racial lines by playing poor blacks against poor

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whites. You've also talked about unfairness in the prison system. Is there an opportunity for Democrats there?

JW: Twenty-five years ago, I was the first American journalist in modern history to be allowed inside the Japanese jail system. I spent a month with the ministry of justice, visiting jails. I wrote a piece for *Parade* magazine, which back then used to do some pretty responsible journalism.

I read all of the volumes and statistics from America's Bureau of Criminal Justice, and from Japan's equivalent. At that time, Japan's population was half of ours. They had 40,000 sentenced offenders in jail. We had 780,000. In other words, we had ten times as many people in jail per capita. I've been thinking about that ever since. I mean, why?

In the last twenty-five years or so, our prison population has almost tripled. Today, instead of having 780,000 people in jail, we've got 2.3 million. That's now sixteen times as many per capita.

There is a fairness issue in here. The black community has been devastated by the way that drug laws are enforced. In part, I look at this as a former Marine. I was in a system that was highly disciplined but also believed in fairness and accountability. The only way you can make a system work, and have people respect it, is to have people believe that it's fair. And we have a system now that's not fair.

For instance, look at how much of the increase in incarceration rates has been driven by nonviolent offenses like drug possession. Or [a recent article] looking at reducing the crack cocaine sentences because the distinction between the crack cocaine and regular cocaine sentences was nonsensical. It's an issue that's really important in the black community. I didn't just spring this, I talked a lot about it during the campaign. Chuck Schumer let me share a hearing. I wanted to look at the economic impact of this as a way to get it going. But I'm gonna stay on it.

WM: Your name has been floated as a possible vice presidential candidate. Is that something you're considering?

JW: Yeah, two months from now they'll be talking about somebody else. This is sort of a phase people in Washington go through.

WM: Still, this VP speculation has grown to a fever pitch. How are you dealing with the public and the press, considering the profile you've had in the last year?

JW: My life really hasn't changed that much. There are some limitations in the way that you might be able to engage people in lively debate [*laughs*], but I've learned how to do that. I was at a bar on Saturday night, it was a Marine Corps birthday and two guys from my platoon in Vietnam were in, my son was up. There was one guy, there's always one at a bar, who came up and started, like, really trying to provoke me. My daughter Sarah is standing there and she said, "Dad, don't hit him. You're a senator now." WM

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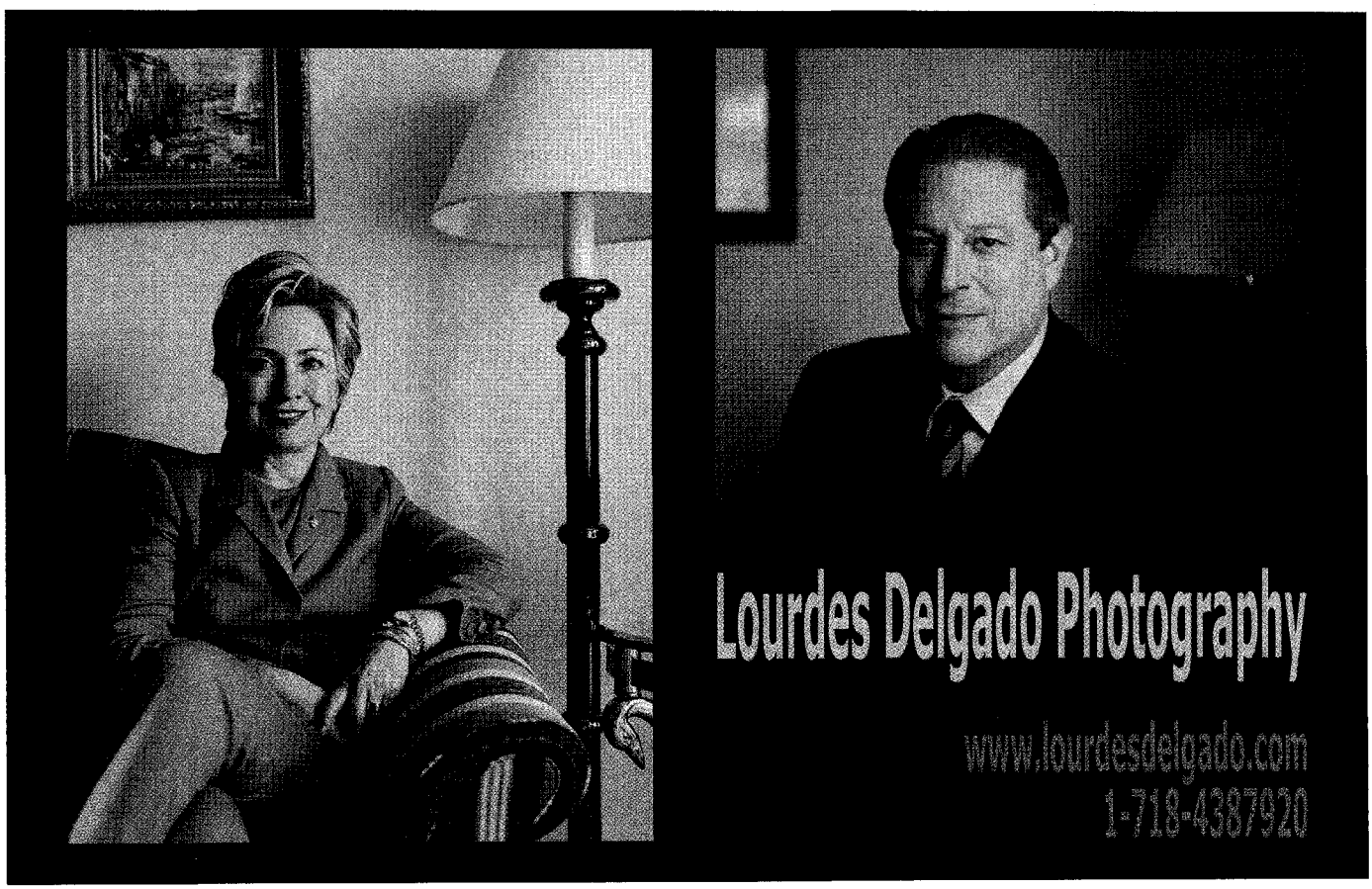

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BRIDGE TO 2000
CONSULTING GROUP

To: All Democratic Presidential Candidates
From: Bridge to 2000 Consulting Group
Re: Preparing for the "Youtubes"

We know some of you have been complaining that Democratic consultants are "old school," or "hackneyed," or "f--ing useless," but let us assure you that Bridge to 2000 intends to work for the people, not the powerful. The purpose of this memorandum is to share with you some insights we've recently developed on the role—and potential—of applying the newest technology, specifically the "Youtubes," to your political campaigns. To use the vernacular, it's time to take the campaign bus for a ride on the "Information Superhighway." Please keep this proprietary information close to the vest, as this technology may prove useful for fund-raising.

We are currently awaiting the data from our most recent polling, but overnight results indicate that a majority of Americans think technology has the potential to change the way we communicate and even, someday, the way we shop. This is especially true for the young people our party covets, those under the age of forty-nine. Understanding this is the key to political success in what we at Bridge to 2000 call the "Internet Age."

In preparation for the "Youtubes Debate," and expanding on it, we'd like to explain to you three key applications that will show you how to be hip to the groove of today's young voters.

1. Weblogs

A weblog is an electronic diary. But instead of keeping it locked under your bed, you keep it on the World Wide Web. Most of these weblogs (folks who "surf the Web" call it a "blog") reveal that their authors have a lot of time on their hands and are very angry. In fact, the angrier you are, the "cooler" you are. You should, therefore, start your own blog immediately and use it to offer any idea that comes to mind, preferably an angry one. It's just like the Senate floor, but without the parliamentary procedure. (Note: we generally discourage rants about children, household pets, or minority groups.)

2. Social Networking

Social networks are also places where you can let everyone see your electronic diary. But here you tell them things that make you happy as well as those that make you angry. People who like the same things you like can become your "friends." The "hottest" of these social networking places is called "The Friendster." We recommend that you immediately begin making friends on The Friendster, because your friends will vote for you. (Note: being friends with someone online doesn't mean you need to talk to them or go outdoors with them, although, on exceptional occasions, you may need to "virtually" masturbate with them.)

3. Youtubes

The Youtubes are, you got it, similar to a diary. Except in this diary, you can show videos of the things you like and don't like. The Youtubes are a subsidiary of the Internets in which the tubes that combine to form the Internets are then rerouted to open up into a cathode-ray tube. In the debate, this configuration allowed actual young people to ask you actual questions, thus demonstrating, in our view, that there is such a thing as too much democracy.

The catch with the Youtubes is that they not only show things, they can also listen to you. We're not sure whether they can smell or touch, but for now we should assume they can. Either way, this opens up the possibility that you can end up on somebody else's Youtubes, which is very dangerous if you are prone to saying what is on your mind. Therefore, we encourage you not to say what is on your mind, and continue to say what is on ours (subject to polling). Actually, that goes for all of the above. Because Bridge to 2000 has been doing this a very long time, and if we have learned anything in several unsuccessful campaigns, it's what it takes to win.

Jeff Nussbaum is a principal in the speechwriting and strategy firm West Wing Writers. **Eric Schnure** is a freelance speechwriter and an adjunct professor at American University. They write together as the **Humor Cabinet**, and can be reached at comments@humorcabinet.com.

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THE *Monthly* INTERVIEW

Philip Zimbardo

In 1971, Philip Zimbardo, then a professor of psychology at Stanford University, devised one of the most famous psychological experiments of the twentieth century. In what is known as the Stanford Prison Experiment, he assigned twenty-four young men roles as prisoners and guards, and observed the group dynamics that ensued. To his horror, the study had to be shut down after just six days because the guards were psychologically abusing the prisoners. When the Abu Ghraib story broke in 2004, Zimbardo immediately spotted parallels with his research. He later testified as an expert witness on behalf of Ivan "Chip" Frederick II, a former staff sergeant sentenced to eight years for his role in the abuse of detainees. Zimbardo's argument to the court was that then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other top Pentagon officials had created an environment in which Frederick and his colleagues were bound to behave with sadistic cruelty. Zimbardo went on to write *The Lucifer Effect*, exploring the underlying psychology at work in both his experiment and the events at Abu Ghraib. His connection to Abu Ghraib became even more personal when Donald Rumsfeld was appointed a visiting fellow this year at the Hoover Institution, a think tank housed at Stanford University, where Zimbardo is a professor emeritus. The *Washington Monthly*'s Peter Laufer and Markos Kounalakis recently caught up with Zimbardo, who is now leading an effort by Stanford faculty and students to prevent Rumsfeld's appointment.

WM: In your book, you look back thirty-five years to the Stanford Prison Experiment and use it to understand, among other things, what happened at Abu Ghraib.

PZ: The reason I wrote the book was because of Abu Ghraib. A couple of years ago all of us saw those horrendous images of American soldiers abusing detainees. At the time, the Bush administration and the military were saying, "This is the work of a few bad soldiers, it's not systemic."

WM: And your studies show that, in fact, it *is* systemic.

PZ: What we can say unequivocally about the Stanford Prison Experiment is that when we began, we had only good apples in our barrel, and within a week the barrel had corrupted those good apples. We went to great lengths to pick college students, so these were brighter-than-average young men from all over the country. We gave them a battery of psychological tests and clinical interviews. We picked the two dozen who were the most normal and the most healthy, and then we randomly assigned them, by a flip of the coin, so half would be guards and half would be prisoners. When we began, we had only normal, healthy young men in our study. Within six days—in what was going to be a two-week experiment—the guards were systematically and brutally abusing the prisoners. Psychologically abusing them, I mean, because I'd prevented physical abuse. But the psychological abuse was so extreme and so creatively evil that five young men playing the role of prisoners had emotional breakdowns.

WM: So what does that tell us about the Abu Ghraib case?

PZ: First we have to understand, what is the situation in which those people are operating? And we have to ask the question, who created that situation? That's where the system comes in. Systems are the cultural, legal, political, historical structures that create situations like Abu Ghraib. But then I became aware of something new in the study of Abu Ghraib. If you want to change behavior, it's not enough to do what we've been doing for centuries—focus on the person and punish him, put him in jail, give him therapy. That evil doesn't change. What we have to begin to do is say, What causes the situation that makes a good person do really bad things?

WM: What does that mean for someone like Donald Rumsfeld?

PZ: Right after the Abu Ghraib images were released on *60 Minutes*, the Senate Armed Services Committee met. Donald Rumsfeld appears and says, "These abuses occurred on my shift. As secretary of defense, therefore I am fully responsible." You can't say, "I'm fully responsible," and not be fully responsible. If the guys under you went to prison, Rumsfeld should be in a prison

Associated Press

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cell along with Lynndie England and Chip Frederick, the man I defended, and Charles Graner, the three that got the longest sentences.

WM: As opposed to going to Stanford University.

PZ: Well, I am one of the people who have instigated a petition signed by 4,000 faculty, students, parents, and alumni, saying that we oppose the designation of Rumsfeld as "distinguished." He's dishonored himself and the office. The Hoover Institution is separate from Stanford, so they can do whatever they want. But this isn't about liberals suppressing the free speech of conservatives. How can you honor a man who said publicly that he is fully responsible for the abuse at Abu Ghraib? War crimes tribunals are essential to make the system bear responsibility for whatever crimes were committed in its name. If Rumsfeld said, "I'm fully responsible," and everyone agreed that these are crimes against humanity, then he should have been tried as well.

WM: In your book, you draw attention to the photographic documentation that was made by the criminals themselves at Abu Ghraib.

PZ: None of this would've gained worldwide media attention were it not for what I call "trophy photos." I try to analyze from various perspectives why they did that, because you're culpable the moment you put yourself in the picture. One clear parallel in America is photos of lynchings. And I have a Web site, LuciferEffect.com, where I have photos and a video clip of pictures that people took during lynchings or while burning blacks alive in the South.

WM: From a psychologist's standpoint, why do people do this?

PZ: Well, it's several things. At Abu Ghraib, it was bragging rights. The military police were the lowest form of human life other than the inmates. They took these pictures and were circulating them. Some of these images—the people piled naked in a pyramid—were on screensavers. They couldn't imagine getting caught, and they imagined if they *did* get caught everybody within the military would think it was okay. But it was also to say to other people, Look what we can do; we may not be much in the eyes of the regular military, but we have the power to do anything we want in our domain. And in the same way, in the lynching photos, the people are saying, Look at the power we have to do anything we want to our enemy. WM

Markos Kounalakis, the president of the *Washington Monthly*, and **Peter Laufer**, the magazine's broadcast editor, host the weekly program *Washington Monthly on the Radio*, from which this interview was excerpted. The show can be heard on XM Radio station 130, P.O.T.U.S. '08, and on our flagship station, Progressive Talk 1260 AM in Washington, D.C. For a list of other stations or to listen online, visit www.washingtonmonthly.com.

THE *Monthly* JOURNALISM AWARD

"The Insurance Hoax" by David Dietz and Darrell Preston, *Bloomberg Markets*, September 2007

Over the past decade, the property insurance industry has blazed toward record profits. *Bloomberg Markets'* David Dietz and Darrell Preston decided to see how the industry's customers are faring. From the charred mesas of Southern California to tornado-ravaged Tennessee to reeling New Orleans, they found frustrated policy holders living in debt and scratching their heads at payouts that were often less than half of what they were owed. And behind the scenes, they found the consulting firm McKinsey, which developed an immensely lucrative system that insurers have used to exploit vulnerable customers.

From hundreds of cases and complaints, Dietz and Preston assembled a convincing record of the industry's tactics. McKinsey prepared PowerPoint slides for Allstate, advising the insurer to quickly offer claimants a low settlement. Most people will take it, unaware that they deserve more. If they protest, another slide advised Allstate to "Sit and Wait," recommending that companies delay payment to wear down the claimant. The Bloomberg reporters also uncovered numerous examples of insurance firms manipulating evidence to avoid paying claims. After Katrina, for instance, several engineers alleged that insurance companies altered damage reports to blame house damage not on wind but on water, for which the companies weren't liable. Mississippi Senator Trent Lott was a victim of this strategy, and sued State Farm after they refused to pay a claim on his house.

Lott is fighting for greater federal oversight of the industry, but the elements aren't in his favor. According to the article, insurance companies form the second largest lobbying force in Washington, after the pharmaceutical industry, spending $98 million in 2006. It seems that when Allstate assures that "You're in good hands," it's really talking to its shareholders. WM

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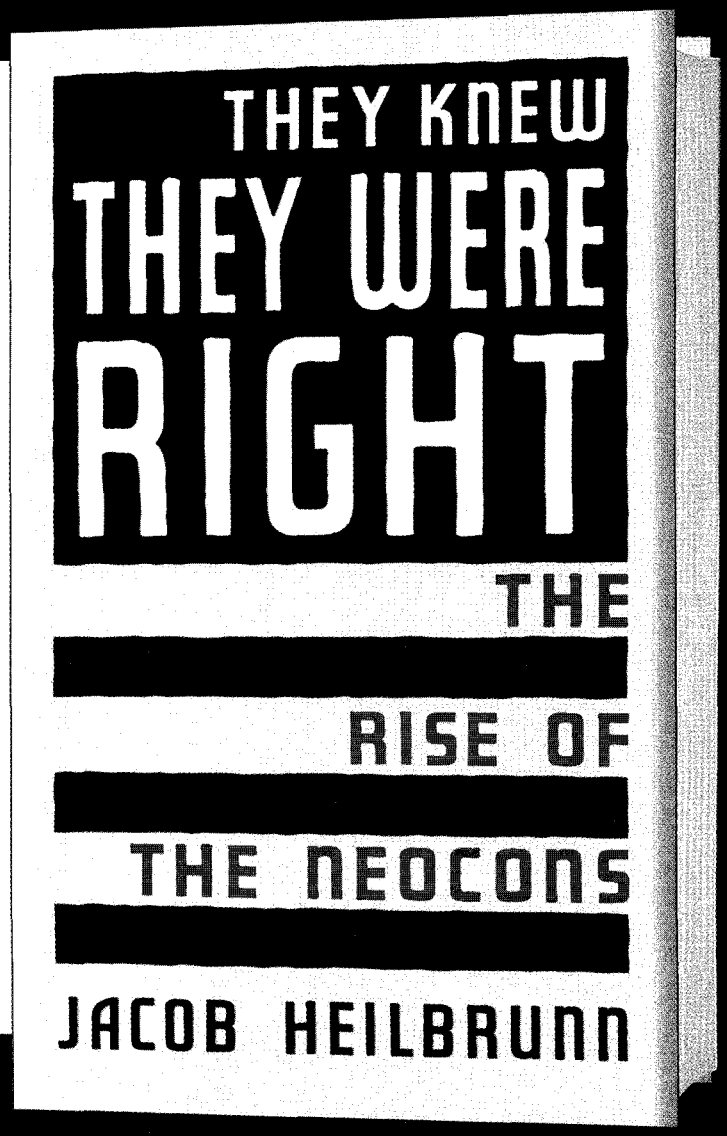

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Associated Press

Brian Roehrkasse, Please Leave the Building

Why the DOJ's spokesperson dishonors the department

By Bud Cummins

With rare exceptions, the Department of Justice has a distinguished history of nonpartisan pursuit of the laws of the United States. It conducts its business across the nation through ninety-three U.S. attorneys' offices, each led by a presidentially appointed U.S. attorney who is the chief federal law enforcement official in the federal district. One of the many responsibilities of the U.S. attorney is to speak, at times, on behalf of the DOJ.

From 2001 to 2006, I was one of those ninety-three attorneys, appointed to the Eastern District of Arkansas. Much of the work I did couldn't be discussed publicly, for legal or ethical reasons. When I did speak to the media, however, I always made sure to be precise and accurate. Credibility is the currency of a federal prosecutor who represents the government. Former Deputy Attorney General Jim Comey often reminded my colleagues and me that U.S. attorneys are immediately assumed to be credible—not because of who they are but because of whom they represent, the United States of America. Credibility is a formidable weapon, and those granted it have a solemn responsibility to preserve it. That means telling the truth.

In 2006, the Department of Justice asked for the resignations of nine U.S. attorneys who had been appointed by President George W. Bush. I was among them. No president had ever fired his own appointees in such a manner, and a scandal was born when Congress started asking questions and getting fishy answers from the DOJ. Many months of lies ensued. Some of the dubious statements, such as those of former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, were made during congressional testimony. Others came in the form of public statements made on behalf of the department. Today, most of those involved in the deception have resigned.

Most, but not all. One player who remains is a DOJ Office of Public Affairs spokesperson named Brian Roehrkasse, a Bush campaign worker in 2000 who went on to be a spokesperson for the Department of Transpor-

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tation and for the Department of Homeland Security before moving over to the DOJ in 2005. Roehrkasse did more than perhaps any other DOJ official to disseminate the avalanche of untruths. A number of reporters have complained to me in private about having been deceived by him. But he never resigned. In fact, he was promoted by Gonzales in August to be the director of the DOJ's Office of Public Affairs.

I believe deeply in the Department of Justice. Serving in the DOJ was the pinnacle of my professional career, and I will be forever indebted to those who helped put me there, including President Bush. But the department's reputation can't be restored if its chief spokesperson isn't credible. Out of dozens of examples, I've chosen five, ordered chronologically, that I hope will illustrate the problem. You'll find no bombshell (and some are complex, so bear with me), but what should become clear from them is that they are statements fundamentally intended to mislead.

1. The Maternity Dodge. I am perhaps unique among the fired U.S. attorneys in knowing the truth about why I was fired. It was to make room for an aide to Karl Rove named Tim Griffin. (I know this because then Deputy Attorney General Paul McNulty made it clear in congressional testimony, and subsequent e-mail disclosures confirmed it.) Tim Griffin took over from me in December 2006, and his arrival attracted scrutiny for two reasons. The first was that he had been appointed under a new and virtually unknown legislative provision in which a U.S. attorney could skip Senate confirmation. The second was that his appointment went against a norm of having the first assistant U.S. attorney of an office serve as interim U.S. attorney until a presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed replacement can report for service. So why hadn't Jane Duke, the first assistant in my office, taken over from me until Griffin could be confirmed? That was the question journalists put to Brian Roehrkasse at the DOJ. His answer: "The first assistant is on maternity leave."

Many folks in Arkansas were incredulous at this explanation, particularly those close to Duke or the office. We'd known for more than six months that Griffin was going to take over for me, and the original due date of Duke's pregnancy fell well after the date of my ultimate resignation. In other words, if the DOJ had ever had any intention of installing Duke as an interim attorney, it could have made plans to do so. It was true that Duke was on maternity leave at the time, but this was only because she'd gone in for an emergency delivery a few days earlier, two months prematurely. Roehrkasse knew that only my colleagues and I would understand why his statement was so misleading. Apparently he was counting on our "loyal" silence.

2. The "Good Faith" Effort. Once it became clear that several U.S. attorneys had been fired, members of Congress became concerned that the White House was trying to circumvent the confirmation process. Tim Griffin, after all, had been appointed in a manner that bypassed congressional advice and consent. In response to Senate accusations of bad faith, it was Brian Roehrkasse who came out with an official statement meant to allay such worries. "In every case, it is a goal of this administration to have a U.S. attorney that is confirmed by the Senate," he said. "It is wrong for a member of Congress to believe that this is in any way an attempt to circumvent the confirmation process."

Except that, in this instance, the Democrats in Congress had it right. After internal DOJ e-mails were subpoenaed, we learned that Gonzalez's chief of staff, D. Kyle Sampson, had authored an e-mail about precisely how to execute an end run around senators in the case of Tim Griffin. Sampson wrote to White House and DOJ colleagues:

> *I think we should gum this to death. Ask the senators to give Tim a chance, meet with him, give him some time in office to see how he performs, etc. If they ultimately say, "no, never" (and the longer we can forestall that, the better), then we can tell them we'll look for other candidates, ask them for recommendations, evaluate the recommendations, interview their candidates, and otherwise run out the clock. All this should be done in "good faith," of course.*

It's possible that Roehrkasse didn't know about Sampson's game plan at the time he made his statement, but he never subsequently corrected the record.

3. The Disappearing Denial. Several weeks after I resigned and just after I had been quoted expressing concern about the allegations against my colleagues, I received an unpleasant phone call from Michael Elston, chief of staff to Deputy Attorney General Paul McNulty. During our conversation, Elston warned that if I—or other fired colleagues—continued to respond to media inquiries about the firings, the DOJ might have to roll out more damaging allegations in the press. In March, McClatchy Newspapers learned about Elston's call to me and ran a piece about it in which they spoke to two of the other fired attorneys anonymously. Brian Roehrkasse criticized McClatchy for running the piece, saying, "It is unfortunate that the press would choose to run an allegation from an anonymous source from a conversation that never took place."

The problem is that it did take place. In spite of Roehrkasse's condemnation of McClatchy, the story was exactly accurate, and we proved it. In fact, at least three of us had received similar threatening calls, and Elston himself didn't even bother to deny having spoken to us, saying instead that he was "shocked and baffled" over what he said had been a misunderstanding. Roehrkasse, undaunted, then found a new spin on the story. "A private and collegial conversation between Mike Elston and Bud Cummins is now somehow being twisted into a perceived threat by former disgruntled employees grandstanding before Congress," he told journalists. This was an impressive mix of untruth and affront. First, the public was evidently supposed to forget that the conversation "never took place." Then it was supposed to believe it did take place but was entirely collegial. Finally, the public was to suspect the fired attorneys of "grandstanding before Congress," even though each of the U.S. attorneys had turned

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down numerous previous invitations to testify. As Roehrkasse well knew, we were talking to Congress reluctantly, and only because we'd been subpoenaed.

4. Spinning the *Post*. In March 2007, the *Washington Post* ran a story that pleased senior officials in the Justice Department. It began as follows:

> *The White House approved the firings of seven U.S. attorneys late last year after senior Justice Department officials identified the prosecutors they believed were not doing enough to carry out President Bush's policies on immigration, firearms and other issues, White House and Justice Department officials said yesterday. The list of prosecutors was assembled last fall, based largely on complaints from members of Congress, law enforcement officials and career Justice Department lawyers, administration officials said.*

This was the story that the DOJ wanted to sell, but the story soon unraveled. For one thing, subsequent DOJ disclosures revealed that the list had been initiated long before "last fall," with names being added or subtracted right up to the last minute. For another, while it was supposedly senior Justice Department officials who had identified prosecutors they believed were underperforming, not one of the officials under oath would admit to placing any of the names on the firing list. Finally, not a single person within the DOJ who was consulted about the list would have been in a position to evaluate the performance of the U.S. attorneys who were fired. The seemingly reasonable explanation reported in the *Post* story was, bluntly put, a load of bull.

So who within the DOJ had caused such deceptive claims to become the basis for the *Post* story? Let the answer come from an e-mail that Kyle Sampson (chief of staff to the attorney general) sent to Brian Roehrkasse at the time: "Great work Brian. Kudos to you and the DAG [Deputy Attorney General Paul McNulty]."

5. The "Oops" Denial. Last April, Alberto Gonzales told the Senate that Seattle U.S. Attorney John McKay had been fired because of recent disputes over an information-sharing system. A few weeks later, however, it emerged that McKay had been recommended for removal as early as March 2005. Why had the DOJ neglected to release a document showing Gonzales's claims to have been false? Because of an "inadvertent mistake," explained Brian Roehrkasse. A suspiciously lucky inadvertent mistake, he might have added.

These are just a few examples. As I said, there are many others. None of them is individually earth shattering, but the pattern of deception employed by this young man is deeply unsettling to me. It is symptomatic of a creeping mendacity in public life, a deceptiveness that has found its way into bedrock institutions that once were immune from Hollywood-style spin. Political campaigns and movie stars traffic in it, certainly, but some institutions, like the DOJ, have always been viewed as sacred. It's one thing when a flack for Lindsay Lohan falsely assures us that Lindsay is sober. It's another when a spokesperson for the DOJ starts telling fibs about a department that is entrusted with the neutral and nonpartisan execution of our nation's laws. The decisions made by the DOJ affect life and liberty. The entire mission depends on the integrity and credibility of the department.

Now, I don't have any way of knowing how Brian Roehrkasse came to make so many dubious or misleading statements. I've never met the man or communicated with him directly. For all I know, his superiors were writing them, and he was simply reading them. But once you realize you are being repeatedly marched out to say untrue things, integrity dictates that you push back or resign before you do it again. Fool me twice, shame on you. Fool me over a dozen times, I'm a willing liar.

When I became a U.S. attorney and the government issued me DOJ credentials, I used my institutional credibility to my advantage frequently. If I made a factual representation to a judge, he usually accepted it. If I told reporters I had to keep quiet about a case for ethical reasons and public safety, they respected my silence. I was sensitive never to abuse this power. Trust should never be taken for granted—by anybody.

Here's another thing: We are at war. There are a great number of relevant and legitimate legal debates about executive power generally—about topics like the terrorist surveillance program, torture, and the legal status of enemy combatants. Unlike a typical *Washington Monthly* reader, I happen to agree with President Bush on most of these issues. The executive branch, from the president down to the investigating agent on the street, should have as many constitutional tools to protect the security of the nation as possible. And it isn't smart to debate all of the issues that face us out in the open in front of our enemies. Some issues need to be analyzed more privately. In sum, our government needs a formidable range of powers in order to investigate and combat terrorism properly.

The public, however, will never grant it such powers if the government and its agencies lack credibility. Congress has to believe the Justice Department when it makes representations about legalities. There can't be doubts.

Unfortunately, doubts are all that someone like Brian Roehrkasse can offer. The Department of Justice has gotten a fresh start with a new attorney general and new senior officials. But how can the public trust any agency with a spokesperson who thinks distorting and deceiving in order to satisfy his bosses is part of the job? If Attorney General Michael Mukasey wants to repair his agency, at the top of his list should be finding the DOJ a trustworthy spokesperson. That means telling Brian Roehrkasse to find a position more suited to his abilities. Hollywood, I suspect, awaits him. WM

Bud Cummins served as the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas from 2001 to 2006.

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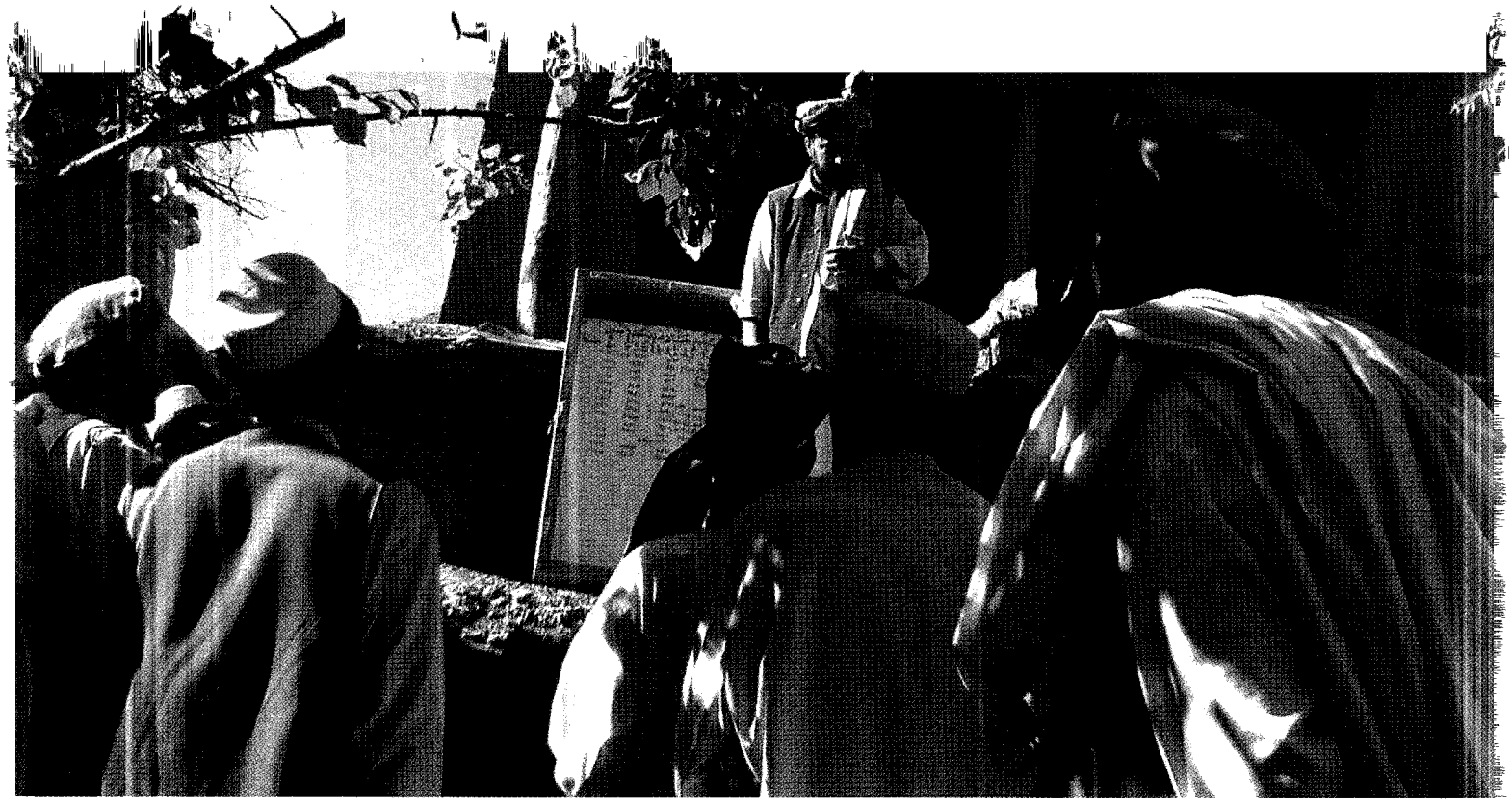

Follow the money: By publicly posting a list of expenses for villagers to scrutinize, the NSP aid program builds accountability and ownership.

The Schools the Taliban Won't Torch

One ingenious aid program is stabilizing the toughest parts of Afghanistan. The U.S. is cutting its funding.

By Gregory Warner

The road from Kabul to Azra, a mountainous district in Afghanistan's central Logar Province, is, in places, not a road at all. At some points it's a rocky riverbed, at others an open desert. For one terrifying stretch, it's a twisty gorge known as the Dubandi Pass, famous for carjackings by Taliban bandits. The steep terrain and treacherous roads have always made this part of the world remote, even by Afghan standards. Tribal ties are stronger than national loyalties, and the unguarded border with Pakistan makes the region an easy access point for insurgents. Azra is the kind of place that both Kabul and Washington worry about most.

As violence has risen, development in this area has floundered. The United States Agency for International Development is funding a much-needed new highway in Azra, but work crews have been repeatedly evacuated because of insurgent threats. This past summer, the murder of two aid workers in a nearby district led Azra's only local nongovernmental organization (NGO) to shut down its office for a month.

But there is one project here that's proceeding relatively unimpeded. One sunny morning in July, I visited a small hydropower facility under construction in the village of Dadi Khel. There I watched a few dozen villagers building a

Courtesy of the author

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small channel, slapping together stones and mortar beside a riverbank. When the project is finished, river water will spin a turbine that will bring electricity to about 300 village families. It will be enough power to allow those residents to turn on lights, iron clothes, and watch Bollywood soaps—a small advance in the face of their many problems, perhaps, but also the first development project that any villager here can remember. And it's remarkable that it exists at all.

This hydropower plant is possible because of something called the National Solidarity Program, a five-year-old development initiative funded by international donors but administered by the government of Afghanistan. It's the only development program present in some of the country's most remote villages, and it operates on the idea that small infrastructure projects like the turbine in Dadi Khel do more than just turn the lights on. They also give Afghans, including those in regions distant from Kabul, some grounds to feel a stake in the success of their own government—and one more reason to resist the call of the Taliban.

Military efforts continue in Afghanistan, but they alone will not bring stability to the country. What's also necessary for the success of coalition efforts is that the Afghan people begin to feel allegiance to a state. Such allegiance depends in part on the government being able to address some of their most basic concerns. As James Dobbins, director of the International Security and Defense Policy Center at RAND Corporation, puts it, "It is the development of Afghan institutions that will offer some possibility for the international community to diminish its commitment."

In a country where almost all the recent news has been bad news, the National Solidarity Program, or NSP, offers a rare glimmer of hope. While there are some things the NSP can't do—it can't build national roadways or electric grids, for instance—it can perform at least two vital functions in Afghanistan: bringing small-scale development to volatile areas like Azra, and helping to nurture more accountable local governing bodies. Unfortunately, the NSP is starting to crumble, because the United States won't properly fund it.

The novel thinking behind the National Solidarity Program is largely the work of Scott Guggenheim, a maverick World Bank staffer who in the late 1990s pioneered a similar program in Indonesia. At the time, development work in Indonesia was a thorny business: the ruling Suharto government was unreliable and deeply corrupt, and funds intended for aid projects often went missing. Guggenheim wanted to work directly with local villages, but in a way that would avoid a main pitfall of past "community-based" aid approaches: having money siphoned off by dubious local leaders.

So Guggenheim designed a program that would distribute small grants to villages and thereby, as he told the *Washington Monthly*, ensure "greater local accountability." When the Kecamatan Development Program was launched in 1998 (the word *kecamatan* means "subdistrict"), Guggenheim's staff organized town hall–style meetings to ask villagers how they thought grant money should be used. Local leaders were charged with administering the projects and required to take bookkeeping classes and keep minutes at planning meetings. Billboards above project sites indicated how money had been spent, encouraging local oversight. "The core elements were requiring that citizens participate and that there be high levels of transparency about how money was being transferred and used," one of Guggenheim's former Bank colleagues, Dennis de Tray, now at the Center for Global Development in Washington, said. "It had to be auditable."

Not only did villagers help plan what to build, they also managed the funds. The fact that the program gave the residents this discretion was a radical step for the World Bank, which, like most donors, preferred to maintain control of how its resources were spent. Guggenheim believes this element was crucial to its success. Because villagers, rather than a foreign aid agency, controlled the purse strings, there was a much greater sense of local ownership over projects—it was their money to lose. Villagers therefore watched more closely and demanded more from the councils that managed the projects. Eventually these councils, supported and trained by the program, took on additional tasks, such as channeling international hurricane assistance. The significance of the approach "wasn't just that people got a water pump," as Guggenheim said, but "that they selected a water pump and [the government] gave it to them."

As World Bank president, Paul Wolfowitz was briefed on the Bank's successful Afghanistan aid program. But he did not advocate increased funding for it, in keeping with Rumsfeld's "light footprint" strategy.

According to World Bank reports and independent evaluations, the Indonesia program succeeded in its twin goals of enabling small development projects and strengthening local governance. But it was another unexpected accomplishment that really caught the attention of Bank officials and the international aid community: when the Suharto government collapsed, the World Bank had to suspend most of its aid programs, but Guggenheim's program was able to continue operating. The reason was that, unlike other aid programs, the Kecamatan Development Program could function even when there was no central state to work with. The World Bank coined the term "community-driven development" to describe this development model, and under then

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president James Wolfensohn launched similar programs in other conflict-ridden areas, from Nepal to Colombia.

In late 2001, shortly after the fall of the Taliban, a friend of Guggenheim's from graduate school, Ashraf Ghani, was appointed as the new finance minister of Afghanistan. Ghani had followed Guggenheim's work and wanted to try something similar at home. So Ghani phoned up his old friend, reaching him in the car on his way up a volcano in Indonesia. "Scott," he said, "we need you in Kabul." In early 2002, the pair set about designing an ambitious community-directed development program for Afghanistan—and the National Solidarity Program was born. As with the Indonesia program, the mission was twofold: to erect small development projects, and to build trust among a village population that for a century had known government only as a predatory force.

With Ghani's aggressive advocacy, the National Solidarity Program got off to a promising start, attracting a top crop of talent from the international aid community. A daily stream of radio messages proclaimed the "largest people's project in history," stirring local anticipation. That fall, the first participating villages elected their new community development councils—representative bodies to manage projects—via the country's first secret-ballot elections.

On my visit to Dadi Khel, as I toured the hydropower plant that was being built, I saw firsthand what was unique about this aid program. Next to the construction site and nailed to a tree was a large poster protected in a wood frame, visible to any villager who walked by. The poster was covered in numbers scrawled in Magic Marker. A villager explained to me that the numbers indicated the dates of each bloc grant disbursement. Residents told me that unlike with most development projects, where residents may not even be aware a project is happening until the day building contractors show up, they had been donating free labor on the weekends to save costs and speed up the arrival of electricity. "This is *our* money," one local teacher said. "All the time we are checking whether it's spent correctly." An independent study by the United Kingdom's York University found less prevalence of corruption in the National Solidarity Program than in other aid programs in Afghanistan.

Local ownership and oversight turn out to have other benefits as well. NSP projects are often more cost-effective, because villagers contribute their own labor, don't require extensive security details, and are better able to negotiate lower materials costs in local markets. The World Bank estimates that projects built by the NSP in Afghanistan are on average 30 percent cheaper than those built by foreign NGOs. And unlike too many other development projects in Afghanistan, the NSP doesn't involve American troops.

Maybe the most surprising characteristic of NSP projects is security related. In a survey last year of school burnings by the Taliban, Human Rights Watch observed that schools built by the NSP have less chance of being destroyed by insurgents than schools built by other aid programs. The reason, as Dennis de Tray explains, relates to the matter of local ownership. "If you're the Taliban, you feel some comfort in attacking things built by foreigners," de Tray says. "But you don't want to create animosity among citizens you're trying to recruit to your side." Sarah Chayes, author of *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban* and now a resident of the southern city of Kandahar, told me that because NSP projects are less subject to corruption (that is, to local commanders and officials coopting donor money), villagers are more willing to maintain and defend them. "If people feel invested in a project," said Chayes, "they'll protect it, at least within reason."

At the same time that the NSP tolerates low-security environments, it can also help to bring greater stability. As a March 2007 report, *Breaking Point*, by the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., explains, "Where government presence is limited or where officials are perceived as unrepresentative, corrupt, and weak, people have turned to elders, tribal chiefs, and imams ... [P]articularly in the south, a lack of central government presence and insecurity has opened provincial districts to abuse by the Taliban and local commanders." The CSIS policy recommendations for enhancing security in Afghanistan include "expanding and deepening the NSP program."

Unfortunately, an Afghan success story like the hydropower plant at Dadi Khel will probably end there. The village council has no money for the freshwater plant they'd like to build next. Though the original design of the National Solidarity Program called for recurrent grants to communities, funding for future projects has been nonexistent—largely as a result of inattention and indifference from the U.S. government.

As of November, the NSP had completed almost 30,000 small aid projects, from hydropower plants to schools to village water pumps. More than 18,000 villages had elected community development councils (out of about 25,000 total villages in Afghanistan). But without additional money to spend, most of those councils will likely dissolve, rather than develop into bona fide governing bodies.

In Guggenheim's Indonesia program, on the other hand, village councils that successfully completed a project could bid for a second bloc grant. The more projects they built, the more adept they became at organizing their communities and the more accustomed villagers became to the idea of local accountability. After the fourth or fifth grant cycle, Guggenheim said, something like real responsive government started to emerge.

Yet without significantly increased funding, Kabul now faces a difficult choice that Guggenheim never had to make: it can expand the program into more villages, or it can continue to support those councils already in existence. It lacks the funding to do both. As Anwar Ul Haq Ahady, the finance minister who succeeded Ghani, argues, there's political pressure on Kabul to expand the program to villages that don't have the NSP and are clamoring for their fair share. Kabul has responded to this pressure by introducing the program into more villages, but as a consequence has been forced to cut off support to

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many others. This means that councils that are just beginning to acquire the habits of governance essential to nation building will have their efforts cut short. Guggenheim, who visited Afghanistan this fall for the first time since the NSP's launch, said he was "quite disturbed" by the current situation.

The underlying problem is a budget crunch. As of this writing, the National Solidarity Program has received roughly $700 million dollars in funding. Approximately 95 percent of that sum has come from two World Bank funding streams: a direct grant, and the reconstruction trust fund that the Bank administers. Of that total, the United States has provided just $13 million, or about 2 percent. A spokesperson for the NSP says that the program is $197 million short of what's needed to expand into Afghanistan's remaining 7,000 villages, let alone to continue working with already established village councils.

According to the RAND Corporation, the American-led nation-building effort in Afghanistan is the least-financed such effort in sixty years. For the first three years after the Taliban fell, the consensus opinion among American and NATO commanders, and the international community at large, was to strive for a "light footprint" in Afghanistan. Donald Rumsfeld articulated the strategy in a February 2003 speech, saying that American and NATO forces should attempt to do more with less, and avoid the kind of strong presence favored by the previous administration that, he said, had created a "culture of dependency" in the Balkans.

Rumsfeld's deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, did not break from the approach during his tenure as World Bank president, which began in March 2005. Although he was briefed on the progress of the National Solidarity Program, he did not advocate for increasing funding for it or any other aid program in Afghanistan.

Washington's failure to support the NSP is also emblematic of its top-down approach to Afghanistan's reconstruction in general. Since 2002, the United States has given just 6.3 percent of its aid money through the Afghan government. Meanwhile, most of the international community is moving in the opposite direction. At a January 2006 meeting in London, representatives from the United Nations, major donor nations, and the Afghan government met to develop a new framework for reconstruction, known as the Afghanistan Compact. One of the principles of the agreement was that donor nations would give more generously to accounts over which the Afghan government has discretion, such as the trust fund that covers about a third of the National Solidarity Program's budget. The next year, most major donors' annual pledges to this fund rose significantly: Canada's contribution jumped from $59 million in 2006 to $121 million in 2007; Germany's went from $20 million to $67 million. The contribution from the United Kingdom, already a firm supporter of the program, rose from $128 million to $131 million. However, the annual U.S. contribution to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund *fell*, going from $74 million in 2006 to $50 million in 2007. Even as the Bush administration has increased overall funding for Afghanistan this year, it has resisted efforts to relinquish more control of the budget to the Afghan people themselves.

The net result is that the NSP's budget is only marginally above what it was before the international community pledged to change course at the London conference. This is already having a deleterious effect. Last year, for example, independent researchers found that 93 percent of invoices to the NGOs that help train village councils hadn't been paid. In an alarming number of cases, funds promised to villages have been delayed, stoking local resentment. "[We told] a lot of these communities, 'Choose your project,'" said one former aid worker who has advised the NSP. "They met, they planned, they started work on their projects—and then the money didn't come." He continued: "I'd be pissed too." Indeed, the delays in dispersing bloc grants—due both to underfunding and donors failing to deliver promised funds on time—undermine the goal of building trust between citizens and local councils. As the aid worker put it, "The cardinal rule in development is that you don't make promises you can't deliver."

Of course, it's difficult to fault the Afghan government for wanting to expand the National Solidarity Program beyond what its current budget realistically allows. In October 2007, hundreds of village council representatives from thirty-four provinces gathered in Kabul for a conference in support of the NSP. In order to give those citizens the means to make a difference in their collapsing country, Afghan President Hamid Karzai needs help from both the World Bank and Washington. At a time when billions of dollars of U.S. aid are spent on military and counternarcotics efforts, the United States has contributed an embarrassingly small fraction of that cost to an aid program that could help build the foundation for long-term stability in Afghanistan. It's essential that the United States act to save the NSP while there's still time. WM

Gregory Warner is a freelance writer and radio producer.

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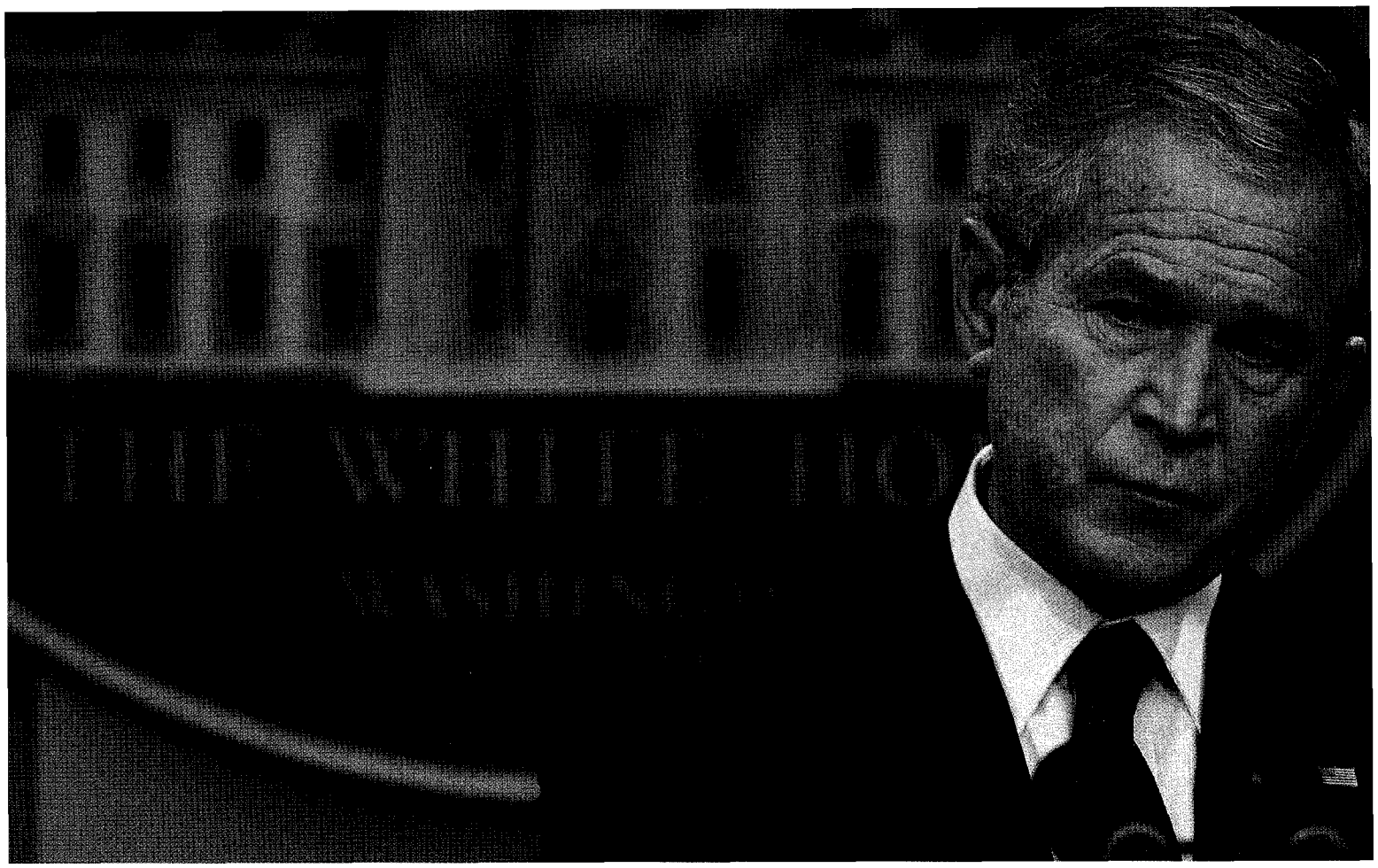

Why Conservatives Hate Bush

It's not because he's an ideological heretic. It's because he's a loser.

By David Greenberg

If I were a Bush administration insider, I'd be scrambling right now to get my book contract. No path leads more surely to critical acclaim these days than the White House confessional. What the insiders are trafficking in, however, isn't the usual gossip about infighting or turf wars but a matter of considerably greater importance: the president's alleged ideological apostasy. President Bush, a fleet of his former enthusiasts now insist, is no conservative.

No complaint against Bush is more popular on the right—or gets a freer pass in the mainstream media—than the notion that he somehow abandoned the philosophy that guides today's Republican Party. And the most recent insiders to turn on Bush for his impurities come from high stations. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, who declined to contest Bush's disastrous tax cut plan back in 2001 when he might have derailed it, used his September memoir to blame Bush for failing to cut spending—a cardinal sin among conservatives. Weeks before, the law professor and Bush White House veteran Jack Goldsmith published a memoir disclosing his dismay with the administration's policies on torturing suspected terrorists, even though he could have denounced the president years ago. Before that, another ex–Bush aide, David Kuo of the euphemistically

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titled "faith-based" office, purported in his book to expose the hollowness of Bush's program for aiding religious institutions that do social work. Was he really expecting that the church-state wall would be demolished, not just eroded?

Greenspan, Goldsmith, and Kuo have, of course, merely joined a long train of right-wing officials, operatives, and journalists who once genuflected before Bush but are now charging him with abandoning the true path. Consider the comments of a few stars of the conservative firmament. Former Bush speechwriter David Frum laments that Bush never adopted a sufficiently robust neoconservative worldview. "I always believed as a speechwriter that if you could persuade the president to commit himself to certain words, he would feel himself committed to the ideas that underlay those words," he told *Vanity Fair* in 2006. "And the big shock to me has been that, although the president said the words, he just did not absorb the ideas." This from the author of the 2003 paean *The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush*. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich these days deplores the "absurdly bloated, undisciplined federal budget." During the 2004 presidential race, interestingly, Gingrich told Fox News that "Abraham Lincoln didn't have a balanced budget. He was fighting a civil war. Franklin Delano Roosevelt didn't have a balanced budget. He was fighting the Second World War. We are in a real war." Pundit Ann Coulter complains of "really stupid Americans like George Bush"—the man she labeled a "magnificent wartime leader" in 2004. And radio host Laura Ingraham wondered this summer if Bush is "too stupid" to understand that his base is angry for "turn[ing] his back on them"—an uncharacteristic move, surely, for the "real man" who "stands by his word" whom she rhapsodized about in 2003. And so it goes.

Heartening as it is to hear the growing criticism of Bush from within the GOP ranks, the idea that he's veered from conservatism is hogwash. Bush is the most conservative president we've had since probably Warren G. Harding—and perhaps ever. He has governed, wherever possible, fully in step with the basic conservative principles that defined Ronald Reagan's presidency and have shaped the political right for the last two generations: opposition to New Deal–style social programs; a view of civil liberties as obstacles to dispensing justice; the pursuit of low taxes, especially on businesses and the wealthy; a pro-business stance on regulation; a hawkish, militaristic, nationalistic foreign policy; and a commitment to bringing religion, and specifically Christianity, back into public policy. "Mr. Bush has a philosophy. It is conservative," wrote Peggy Noonan in 2002. Ah, but times change. Last June she complained, "What conservatives and Republicans must recognize is that the White House has broken with them."

It's certainly true that Bush hasn't delivered on every last item on the conservative wish list. But what president has—or ever could? What Bush's new critics on the right don't see, or won't see, is that to credibly accuse Bush of betraying "conservatism" requires constructing an ideal of conservatism that exists only in the world of theory, not the world of practical politics and democratic governance. It's an ideal that *any* president would fail to meet. In a democracy, governing means taking into account public opinion and making compromises. That means deviating at times from doctrinal purity.

Indeed, Bush's presidency, far from being a subversion of modern American conservatism, represents its fulfillment. For most of the president's tenure, many of the same folks who now brand him as an incompetent or an impostor happily backed his agenda. Republicans controlled the Senate and the House with iron discipline. They populated the federal court system, built a powerful media apparatus, and, for years after 9/11, benefited from a public climate of reflexive deference to the powers that be. From 2001 to 2007, the conservative movement had as free a hand as it could have hoped for in setting the agenda. The fruits of its efforts are Bush's policies.

So while conservatives may be disillusioned with Bush, they can't seriously claim it's over his policies. Another explanation seems more likely: When the Iraq War really turned sour in 2005 and the domestic catastrophes piled up, the appeal of being linked with Bush's legacy dimmed. Like mobsters turning state's evidence before they're sent up the river, former Bushies began to testify, throwing themselves on the mercy of the court of public opinion. The reason isn't that Bush is an imperfect conservative. It's that he's an unsuccessful one.

Bush's presidency, far from being a subversion of modern American conservatism, represents its fulfillment.

One clue that right-wingers might be acting a bit opportunistically in turning on Bush is the sloppy nature of so many of their arguments that he's left conservatism. In seeking to salvage a pure doctrine from the flotsam of the Bush years, for example, his onetime boosters will often say that he forsook a core conservative principle such as "tradition," "humility," or "small government"—or, more vapidly, "adherence to the Constitution," "the wisdom of the Founders," or "honesty in government." But general concepts like these are so elastic as to encompass any grounds for disowning a failed course of action—or so generic as to be useless as defining traits of conservatism. (Don't liberals preach adherence to the Constitution?) It may be fashionable now to deride Bush's Iraq policy as insufficiently humble, but on the eve of the invasion, when Bush flouted world opinion, how many conservatives warned that he was jettisoning principle? And, for that matter, how does the failure to prepare for and address Hurricane Katrina's damage stem from a dearth of humility? Even the oft-heard conceit that Bush has become a

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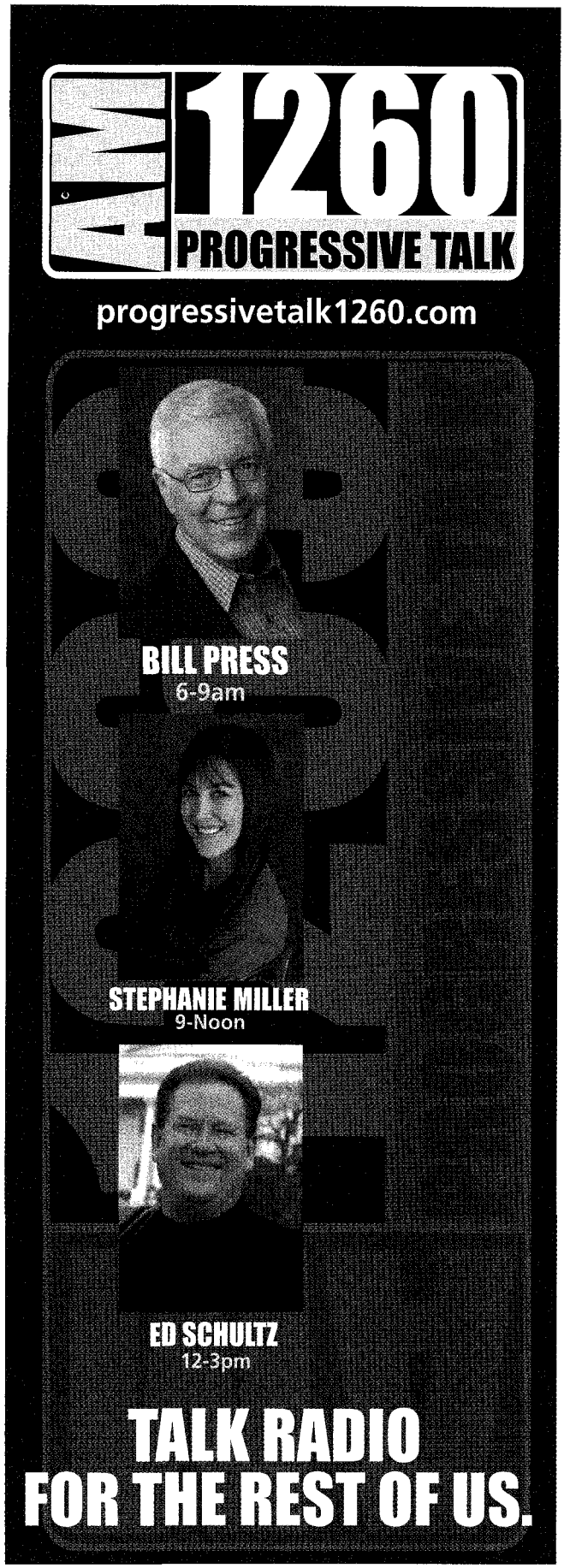

"big government" conservative—breaking from postwar conservatism's antistatist foundations—doesn't withstand scrutiny. After all, practically everyone on the right backed his tax cuts, corporate giveaways, and military and security expenditures, which, along with health care cuts, have busted the budget. On inspection, buzzwords like "big government" and "humility" appear to be supple rhetorical tools, used inconsistently and opportunistically, for polemical force or political positioning—not as the basis of serious intellectual critiques.

The same tendentiousness marks the invidious comparisons of Bush to various heroes from the Republican past. Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel charged Bush with betraying Dwight Eisenhower's legacy. Texas Congressman and presidential aspirant Ron Paul has invoked the "true" conservatism of former Senator Robert Taft. For others, Barry Goldwater is the forsaken prophet. But here, once again, selective readings of history are at work. (Taftite isolationism, for example, hasn't been conservative doctrine since before the Eisenhower administration.) This abuse of history becomes clear from a comparison of Bush to the man beside whom virtually all conservatives claim he pales: Ronald Reagan.

For the last quarter century, Reagan's rhetoric and ideology have guided the conservative movement and the Republican Party, which were effectively fused during his presidency. The Reagan love-in—which includes a project led by GOP operative Grover Norquist to name something in every county in America after Reagan—has been gathering steam since his retirement. It reached an absurd peak at a Republican presidential debate earlier this year, when every candidate outdid the last to seize the late president's mantle.

What few of the GOP candidates would admit, though, is that the purest heir to Reaganism is George W. Bush. In 2003, Bill Keller of the *New York Times* even wrote a definitive 8,000-word article in the Sunday magazine called "Reagan's Son," which detailed striking similarities in the two men's personal styles, policies, and even staffing. Speaking to Keller, Norquist blessed the analogy. And since then the key traits that Keller identified as shared by Reagan and Bush—the "enthusiastic assumption of the role of solo superpower," "tax cuts with a supply-side bias," "a shift of responsibilities from government to the private sector, and from the federal government to the states"—have, if anything, intensified. Judging by those aspects of Reagan's record that his cheerleaders extol most ardently, Bush has actually proven *more faithful* to conservatism, not less, than his predecessor.

But Bush's new critics spare themselves the pain of finding fault with their hero through selective memory. They remember that Reagan was steadfast (most of the time) in his conservative rhetoric and ideology—just as Bush has been. They forget, however, that in practice Reagan veered from his official line as politics dictated or when, as invariably happened, different conservative ideals clashed.

Recall some of Reagan's backtracking: He came into office promising to abolish cabinet departments, but he ended

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up creating the Department of Veterans' Affairs. He vowed to cut government, but despite some slashing of programs, it continued to expand overall. He passed a tax cut in 1981, but when deficits ballooned he raised taxes anew. He talked of privatizing Social Security, but when he met resistance he gave up the plan. Reagan wanted the United States to project more military force abroad, but when he ran into trouble, as with the 1983 bombing of the American military barracks in Beirut or with the Iran-contra scandal, he often backed off. And having won conservatives' hearts with rhetoric that called the Soviet Union an "evil empire," Reagan infuriated them by embracing Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev as an authentic reformer and engaging in arms-control talks between the two superpowers. If self-styled conservative purists were intellectually honest, they would prefer Bush's foreign policy to Reagan's.

The point here isn't to deny that Reagan was conservative; he was. The point is that Reagan didn't adhere to right-wing doctrine any more rigorously than Bush has. On the contrary, he conceded more to countervailing liberal pressures. Because Reagan ended his presidency on a note of triumph, however, and because his reputation waxed after his exit from office thanks to the cold war's end, his compromises with liberals—and with the realities of governance—were not just forgiven but largely forgotten. (See Josh Green's 2003 January/February *Washington Monthly* piece, "Reagan's Liberal Legacy.")

More than forty years ago, the public opinion analysts Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril wrote a book called *The Political Beliefs of Americans* that is now remembered chiefly for a single aperçu: that Americans are rhetorically conservative but "operationally" liberal. That observation is still mostly true today. What it means is that most Americans like the Republicans' talk about small government, low taxes, and military strength. But they have nevertheless also become strongly attached to basic services that government provides, such as Social Security benefits or effective disaster relief—as Bush learned the hard way. Operationally, they don't always want that conservative rhetoric put into practice.

Intuitively, if not consciously, successful Republican politicians—as well as liberal ones like Bill Clinton—have grasped this axiom. Reagan certainly did. He offered an aggressively conservative rhetoric and certainly implemented a right-wing agenda where possible—most effectively by appointing conservatives to executive-branch roles as regulators or promulgators of policy, where they would escape press scrutiny most of the time. (Bush has done the same.) But Reagan was sensitive to the limits of conservatism as a governing philosophy. When he ran up against public opinion, he relented as often as he pressed ahead.

Bush is different. In his new book, *The Bulldozer and the Big Tent*, the sociologist and journalism professor Todd Gitlin aptly describes Bush's rigid ideology and aggressive political tactics as the consummate expression of his party's political style. Bush hasn't compromised much with the Democrats and until recently didn't have to. Only on one major issue—immigration—did he initially take a stand to the left of his party, and he quickly dropped his efforts when his base revolted. The criticisms of Bush now coming from various quarters on the right have it precisely backward. They fault him for compromising too much when his failures have resulted from his refusal to compromise more.

So are conservatives unhappy with Bush because he let down their causes? No. They're miffed that Bush, in pursuing those very causes, alienated two-thirds of the voting public. Starting with Katrina in the fall of 2005, and proceeding through the worsening civil strife in Iraq, the revelations of the wiretapping and U.S. attorney scandals, and growing discontent with domestic problems like health care, Americans lost faith in Bush's agenda. Various right-wingers are now trying to salvage conservatism not simply to maintain their own reputations but because they worry that, having soured on Bush, voters may soon sour on the creed of conservatism itself. That would be a turn of events for the right so damaging that not even another Ronald Reagan could repair it. WM

David Greenberg, a historian at Rutgers University and columnist for *Slate*, is the author of *Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image* and *Calvin Coolidge*.

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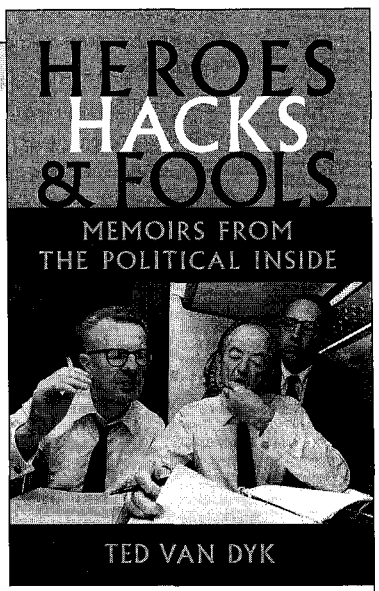

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Norman's Conquest

Why Rudy Giuliani loves Norman Podhoretz

By Jacob Heilbrunn

When Norman Mailer died in November, it was hard not to feel a twinge of melancholy and nostalgia for the vanished world of the New York Family of intellectuals. In the past decade, many of its most colorful members have passed away—among them Leslie Fiedler, Saul Bellow, and Seymour Martin Lipset. A surviving neoconservative remnant that includes Irving Kristol and Gertrude Himmelfarb has reached its dotage but is content to see its children carry on the battles and struggles it once waged. Only one original representative of that fractious group of intellectuals remains in the fray. That is Norman Podhoretz, who, at the age of seventy-seven, has recently—and improbably—reached the height of his celebrity and notoriety.

Podhoretz was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004, and he has been in the forefront of support for the Iraq War. In the late spring of 2007, he met with President George W. Bush and Karl Rove to urge Bush to bomb Iran. His son, John Podhoretz, was recently chosen to be the next editor of *Commentary*, the magazine that Norman himself headed for several decades. Impressive as this reach may be, however, it is Podhoretz's newest sphere of influence that has most vexed—and frightened—his detractors. He is a close confidant of leading Republican presidential candidate Rudolph Giuliani.

In June, the former New York City mayor named Podhoretz a senior advisor to his campaign. It is no ceremonial post. Podhoretz speaks regularly with the candidate and trumpets their association. "As far as I can tell there is very little difference in how [Giuliani] sees the war and how I see it," Podhoretz told the *New York Observer* in October. And indeed there isn't much daylight between what Podhoretz has written and what Giuliani is saying on the stump. Podhoretz has judged the war in Iraq an "amazing success"; Giuliani in November declared that he "never had any doubt" about the wisdom of invading Iraq. On Iran, Podhoretz has said, "The choice before us is either bomb those nuclear facilities or let them get the bomb." Giuliani told an audience in October: "If I'm president of the United States, I guarantee you we will never find out what [Iran] will do if they get nuclear weapons, because they're not going to get nuclear weapons."

As a foreign policy guru, Podhoretz is hardly an obvious choice for Giuliani. The mayor has virtually no direct foreign policy experience, and neither does Podhoretz—he is an editor, polemicist, and literary critic who has never worked in government. Podhoretz is certainly a prominent hawk, and Giuliani needs hawks in his camp to help insulate him from attacks on the right, particularly from social conservatives. But there are plenty of foreign policy heavyweights who could play that role, from Henry Kissinger to Robert Kagan. And if the candidate wished to put some distance between himself and the unpopular current

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occupant of the White House, Podhoretz is no help; his son-in-law, Elliott Abrams, is Bush's deputy national security adviser.

But the choice of Podhoretz seems to have little to do with Giuliani trying to position himself politically or sit at the feet of an experienced master. Rather, what draws Giuliani to Podhoretz, I think, is something else—a very human quality that the former mayor sees in himself: an unrelenting, us-versus-them bare-knuckledness that one seldom encounters in the oak-and-port world of the Council on Foreign Relations. I myself encountered this quality when meeting Podhoretz for the first time, at a Manhattan Institute gala dinner for William F. Buckley Jr. at which Giuliani hailed his championing of conservative values. Podhoretz expressed his disappointment at the evenhanded tone of a review I had written in the *New Leader* of his memoir *My Love Affair With America*. "My friends, I expect to go all out for me," he said, noting with pride that the historian Ronald Radosh had called him a "national treasure." After acknowledging that we didn't really know each other personally, Podhoretz continued, "My enemies, I expect them to hit me as hard as they can. That's the way it should be."

I don't mean to make too much of a single encounter. However, having spent several years subsequently interviewing leading neoconservatives, including Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter, as part of a history of the neocon movement, I can say that the rules of book reviewing that Podhoretz set out at that party do rather nicely sum up an intellectual philosophy he has developed over a lifetime. It's one of unremitting combativeness, rooted as much in temperament as in a worldview. It's also a philosophy that strikes a deeply responsive chord in Giuliani, who, like Podhoretz, is a Brooklyn-born street brawler who started out on the left and moved steadily to the right. A good place to look for hints of what a Giuliani presidency might offer, then, is in the life of that last active New York Family intellectual, Norman Podhoretz.

Podhoretz was born in 1930 into a lapsed Orthodox Jewish family, the son of a sixty-dollar-a-week milkman. He grew up in Brownsville, a Brooklyn neighborhood that profoundly shaped his character. In his book *Ex-Friends*, Podhoretz describes Norman Mailer, who grew up near him and attended the same high school, as a similar product of the local street culture: "Like me, and practically every Brooklyn boy I had known, he was direct and pugnacious and immensely preoccupied with the issue of manly courage." Podhoretz was a member of a gang called Club Cherokee and hung out with gamblers and other riffraff as a child. It was an environment in which, he recalled in a 1999 television interview, "the main desideratum was to be tough and not to back down from a fight. And to be a sissy, as people used to say, or a coward was probably the worst possible condition into which you could fall." It was the credo Podhoretz would follow all his life.

A series of mentors applied an intellectual buffing to Podhoretz, beginning with "Mrs. K.," a high school English teacher intent on ensuring that he made it into Harvard, wore a

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

proper suit, and learned how to use silverv
horetz spoke Yiddish as his first language a
accent. At Columbia University, where he s
erary critic Lionel Trilling and worked hard
resentments were never far from the sur
wealthier Jews and homosexuals, two gro
he felt condescended to him. Later, Podh
with typical bluntness and venom, at his C

> *Is it any wonder that I aroused so much*
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> *dents who rarely said anything in class bu*
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The hostility never dissipated. (Much
other neocons' loathing for liberal Jews ca
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and the Uptown Jews, prosperous Germa
families that were intent on assimilation an
of Jewish immigrants with distaste.) Decad
would assert that gays and feminists were
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Podhoretz reveled in the intellectual
wanted to lose his connection to the stree

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the two, becoming a brash literary critic who assailed heavyweights such as Saul Bellow. Still, in the late 1950s, Podhoretz was pretty much a conventional liberal, celebrating the bourgeois virtues of television shows in one of his first pieces for *Commentary*. He had been assured by his elders at Columbia and elsewhere that he would become the next big thing, and he did, assuming the editorship of *Commentary* in 1960. He was thirty years old.

Commentary had a sterling reputation, with contributors such as Hannah Arendt and George Orwell. But Podhoretz soon shook things up by rebelling against his mentors, especially Trilling. The split was probably inevitable. Trilling was a mandarin, someone who tried, as far as possible, to behave and appear like an English gentleman. He never raised his voice. He disavowed any interest in Jewish topics and refused initially to join the board of *Commentary*. He wrote in an aloof and sometimes opaque style, one adopted, as Sam Tanenhaus has pointed out in *Slate*, by older Jewish critics who wanted to demonstrate that they were worthy inheritors of the Anglo-American literary tradition. Podhoretz, not surprisingly, thought this was a bunch of bilge. He wanted to be a real American, not a milquetoast Jew disguising his origins, and he began to see Trilling as a kind of sellout who lacked the guts to stand up to radical blacks and left-wing students who were badmouthing the greatness of America. (It's hard not to wonder if Podhoretz's constant denunciations of cowardly liberals today aren't a form of shadowboxing with the memory of his former mentor.)

Podhoretz's banishment from an increasing number of establishment circles has endeared him all the more to Giuliani.

Podhoretz never felt entirely at home with his fellow liberals, but in his first years at *Commentary* he attacked them mainly from the left. During the Kennedy administration, in 1962, Podhoretz wrote an essay for *Partisan Review* denouncing the cold war and criticizing President Kennedy for being too timorous about publicly acknowledging that the United States had to retrench on its commitments abroad.

Gradually, though, Podhoretz began to inch rightward, showing an ever-greater willingness to shock his own side. With his February 1963 *Commentary* essay "My Negro Problem—and Ours," Podhoretz created a furor. The article concludes with a plea for racial intermarriage, but it is mostly remembered for being a blunt recollection of Podhoretz's childhood terror of the black children and teenagers who, at times, beat him to a pulp. "In my world it was the whites, the Italians and Jews who feared the Negroes, not the other way around," he writes. "The Negroes were tougher than we were, more ruthless, and on the whole they were better athletes." On the playing field itself is where Podhoretz sets his most vivid encounter with a force majeure. He recounts how he and his buddies once refused to vacate a ball field after being ordered off by a gang of black youths. The young Norman is beaten up, and, writes Podhoretz, "we retreat, half whimpering, half with bravado. My first nauseating experience of cowardice. And my first appalled realization that there are people in the world who do not seem to be afraid of anything, who act as though they have nothing to lose." As with much of Podhoretz's writing, this is raw stuff, willfully truthful. There is no attempt at pretense or dissimulation. Rather, Podhoretz, flagrantly repudiating the lofty Trilling mode, brandishes his emotions as intellectual arguments; they fuel the imprecations he directs at his foes.

If Podhoretz had been flirting with conservative ideas in the early 1960s, the upheaval of the rest of the decade prompted a steady transmigration away from the left. Like many other liberals, especially Jewish ones, Podhoretz was enraged by the link between black radicalism, anti-Semitism, and hostility to Israel. After the Six-Day War in 1967, which left Israel as an occupier of the West Bank, black radicals began to suggest that Jews were behaving like Nazis. Worse was to come. In 1968, the Ford Foundation, under the leadership of McGeorge Bundy, the Kennedy-era national security adviser who had helped mire the U.S. in Vietnam, carried out an experiment in local control over schools in the Brooklyn district of Ocean Hill–Brownsville. The result was that black radicals attacked Jewish teachers, calling them "Middle East murderers of colored people." By the end of the decade, New York had descended into unprecedented levels of crime and racial strife, a descent that the neoconservatives-to-be felt could be traced to the collapse of liberalism and the rise of the New Left.

Podhoretz and others were profoundly shaken by New York's deterioration. They were also scandalized by what they saw as the liberal intelligentsia's failure to stand up to radicals. Confronted with behavior that was often wacky and thuggish, the patrician establishment sometimes responded limply. It was bad enough that the likes of McGeorge Bundy would seek to cosset rather than confront black radicals. But even worse were the many New York intellectuals who seemed to have lost their mental gyroscopes as well. For Podhoretz, the *New York Review of Books*, which was running articles defending the Black Panthers, represented a particularly distasteful strain of radical chic. (Tom Wolfe would soon popularize the term.) For Podhoretz the *Review*'s brief flirtation with radicalism, chronicled in Philip Nobile's superb book *Intellectual Skywriting*, became synonymous with everything that had gone wrong with America. He kept fighting the same old battles even as the old radicalism disappeared.

Inevitably, the intellectual disputes turned personal. Podhoretz was a gregarious presence at New York parties, but he never minded letting his temper surface. As Sidney Blumenthal recounted in *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment*, at

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several dinners at the Columbia Faculty Club in the early 1960s, attended by Daniel Bell, Lionel Trilling, Jason Epstein, and Sidney Hook, among others, Podhoretz made a fool of himself. He assailed his mentors, saying that Hook was "a fraud" and shouting, "You're not a Social Democrat!" By the close of the decade, these spats had become even more acrimonious. Podhoretz turned on his old friend Jason Epstein, prompting the *New York Times Magazine* to devote ten pages to an essay called "Why Norman and Jason Aren't Talking."

What had ended up permanently alienating Podhoretz from his circle of friends was the publication of his memoir *Making It* in late 1967. His friends had told him to suppress it. He ignored them. To Podhoretz's dismay, his old chum Norman Mailer trashed it in *Partisan Review*. Podhoretz was extruded from Manhattan literary society. But, in some respects, announcing that he was an arriviste helped him to arrive. Podhoretz had become notorious—and then became more so by moving to the right within the ranks of the Democratic Party. He reveled somewhat in his apostasy, having always been envious of the 1930s generation of intellectuals that had undergone the searing experience of breaking with Marxism. Now he would replicate the heroic conversion experience by opposing the New Left he had once championed.

Podhoretz decried the rise of George McGovern and tried to return the Democratic Party to traditional anticommunist liberalism of the very sort he had previously denounced as complacent and retrograde. When Jimmy Carter took swipes at an "inordinate fear of communism" and affirmative action became a staple of the Democratic Party platform, however, Podhoretz had had enough. Eventually, he, along with other neocons, came to see liberals and radicals as one and the same. In the 1980s, Podhoretz embraced Ronald Reagan and moved firmly over to the right. He never looked back.

The Reagan White House welcomed the support of the formerly liberal New York intellectuals (even appointing Jeane Kirkpatrick, a protégé of Hubert Humphrey, whom Kirkpatrick adored to the end of her days, to be ambassador to the United Nations). But the neocon infatuation with Reagan turned sour. Podhoretz accused Reagan of engaging in "appeasement" in 1983 for exiting from Lebanon and failing to stand up to the Soviets over the introduction of martial law in Poland. He went on to condemn Reagan for not maintaining a hard line against Mikhail Gorbachev, writing about the "fantasy of communist collapse." With the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, nearly all sides, including the neocons, claimed vindication.

With the presidency of George H. W. Bush, the neocons faded in influence, becoming little more than gadflies throughout the 1990s. Podhoretz himself, in a speech at the American Enterprise Institute, pronounced neoconservatism dead. Bill Clinton had pursued a reformist liberalism, including curbing welfare and defeating Serbian aggression in the Balkans—all of which were policies that effectively took away much of the sting of the neocon criticisms of Clinton himself. Had it not been for the attacks of September 11, neoconservatism might have faded away with its founders.

In 1994, Podhoretz was winding down his time at *Commentary* and Rudy Giuliani was beginning his first term as mayor of New York City. In some ways, the two men's careers were on entirely different trajectories. In others, however, the men had been living parallel lives. Like Podhoretz, Giuliani grew up in Brooklyn and had a taste for conflict bred into him. As a child, Giuliani had been dressed by his father in a pinstriped Yankee uniform in a borough of Dodger fans, a sartorial choice that taught him to "physically defend myself from neighborhood kids who would attack me."

And like Podhoretz, Giuliani started off on the left before moving right. A supporter of George McGovern in 1972, Giuliani didn't become a registered Republican until 1981, when he switched parties in time to land a plum job in the Reagan Justice Department. As U.S. attorney in New York from 1983 to 1989, his combative temperament served him well as he went after mobsters and white-collar criminals. After Giuliani was elected mayor, he brought his fighting style to City Hall. Though he espoused liberal views on some issues—abortion, gays, illegal immigration—he also picked Podhoretz-like high-profile fights with the liberal-left. He refused to meet with prominent black leaders in the city. He famously tried and failed to shut down a Brooklyn Museum art exhibit deemed disrespectful of the Virgin Mary. He had Palestinian Authority head Yasser Arafat evicted from a concert of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony at Lincoln Center and ordered the NYPD not to allow him to travel outside Turtle Bay. His press conferences were often bruising affairs in which he insulted reporters for questions considered foolish or unworthy, behavior he also exhibited toward voters who called in on his weekly talk radio program.

Podhoretz brandishes his emotions as intellectual arguments. They fuel the imprecations he directs at his foes.

Just as the neocons were on the outs in the 1990s, so Giuliani seemed to be headed nowhere as the end of his second term loomed in 2001. New Yorkers had tired of his truculence. But then came crisis, and with it redemption in the form of the September 11 attacks. Both New York's fiery mayor and the neocons found themselves with a new, Churchillian mission. And when the war in Iraq went south, Giuliani, like Podhoretz, neatly pivoted, focusing his ire on the threat from Iran—a threat that has increased, of course, thanks largely to an Iraq war that both men steadfastly defend.

No one has fought more valiantly to ensure that conservatives maintain ranks than Podhoretz. This past September (on the eleventh), Podhoretz came out swinging with

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his latest book, *World War IV: The Long Struggle Against Islamofascism*. It represents no departure from any of his other recent writings on the subject. The United States, Podhoretz says, has only fired the opening shots in a lengthy campaign that should include attacks on Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria in turn, wiping out their regimes and creating the conditions for democracy in the Middle East. Podhoretz never pauses to discuss the feasibility of carrying out such measures; to him it is self-evident that the U.S. must exercise moral and military leadership, heedless of any financial or human costs, for the stakes are nothing less than survival or annihilation. At the same time, the country must root out the liberal traitors at home who are trying to sap its will to defeat its foreign enemies. According to Ian Buruma in the *New York Review of Books*, Podhoretz "expresses a weird longing for the state of war, for the clarity it brings, and for the chance to divide one's fellow citizens, or indeed the whole world, neatly into friends and foes, comrades and traitors, warriors and appeasers, those who are with us and those who are against."

Podhoretz's influence and inflammatory statements have made him Exhibit A for writers seeking to demonstrate the lunacy of expanding the war on terror to include Iran. In the *New Republic*, Todd Gitlin condemned Podhoretz for twisting his words about the meaning of patriotism for liberals after 9/11, and the British journalist Johann Hari depicted him, in an account of a *National Review* boat cruise, as something of a nutcase, clinging to the conviction that weapons of mass destruction were hidden away in Syria. In the *New York Times Book Review*, Peter Beinart said that Podhoretz is exploiting the war on terror to "titillate himself with fantasies of civic violence." And Fareed Zakaria, writing in *Newsweek*, wrote that Podhoretz "provides not a scintilla of evidence" to justify likening Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Hitler.

Giuliani, like Podhoretz, is a Brooklyn-born street brawler who started out on the left and moved steadily to the right.

If anything, however, Podhoretz's banishment from an increasing number of establishment circles has endeared him all the more to Giuliani. Giuliani, like Podhoretz, sees a global conflict in which the United States is locked in permanent warfare. Tellingly, Giuliani calls for adding at least another ten combat brigades to the U.S. Army—a difficult goal to meet, given the recruiting challenges brought on by the Iraq War, and one that, thanks to an exodus of top junior officers, could wind up undermining military effectiveness (see "The Army's Other Crisis," by Andrew Tilghman, page 44).

Nowhere are Giuliani and Podhoretz more in agreement than on the issues of dealing with the United Nations and Iran. Neocons loathe the UN because of its history of antagonism toward Israel. Giuliani dismisses it as irrelevant: "The organization can be useful for some humanitarian and peacekeeping functions, but we should not expect much more of it," he said recently. This is of a piece with Giuliani's impatience with diplomacy. Giuliani has expressed disdain for a U.S. role in mediating between the Israelis and the Palestinians: "Too much emphasis has been placed on brokering negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians—negotiations that bring up the same issues again and again." Though Giuliani makes a few token nods to engaging in diplomacy with Iran, it's abundantly clear that force is on his mind. He does not address the concerns, particularly acute in the Pentagon, that any military attack on Iran might not only fail to wipe out its nuclear weapons program but also prove a public relations and security disaster.

The truth is that at the core of Giuliani's campaign is the message that America needs to redouble its efforts to go on the attack or remain a fat target for its enemies—the very message, it must be said, that Podhoretz himself has been preaching for decades. Cynics, including many in the press corps, tend to discount Giuliani's more militaristic and unilateralist statements as political posturing by candidates pandering to the GOP base. But that's a foolish assumption. I believe that Giuliani is in deadly earnest about his foreign policy positions. For both him and Podhoretz, these positions are rooted in gut beliefs that are not open to debate.

In short, arguing over the finer points of foreign policy doesn't especially interest Giuliani or, at this point, his advisor. Like George W. Bush, they don't do nuance, and both men are less about debate now than about attitude. Increasingly, Podhoretz has been making his points by resorting to tired analogies and questioning the character of his opponents. Appearing with Fareed Zakaria on the *NewsHour With Jim Lehrer* in late October, Podhoretz said, "I want to say that I think the attitude expressed by Fareed Zakaria represents an irresponsible complacency that I think is comparable to the denial in the early '30s of the intentions of Hitler that led to what Churchill called an unnecessary war involving millions and millions of deaths that might have been averted if the West had acted early enough." Zakaria responded, "Norman, perhaps instead of calling me names, you could just explain why the arguments are right or wrong."

Zakaria was wasting his breath. Real men don't explain. They seek to intimidate and cow their opponents into abject submission—which is why Podhoretz and Giuliani were probably fated to join forces. In becoming Rudy's maven, Norman has made his greatest conquest. WM

Jacob Heilbrunn is senior editor at the *National Interest* and author of *They Knew They Were Right: The Rise of the Neocons*.

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Off the maps: Independent geologist Yong Yang's research mission to the source of the frozen Yangtze River was inspired by doubts about Beijing's water diversion plans.

The Middle Kingdom's Dilemma

Can China clean up its environment without cleaning up its politics?

By Christina Larson

In January 2007, a geologist named Yong Yang set out from his home in China's western Sichuan Province with four researchers, two sport utility vehicles, one set of clothes, and several trunks of equipment for measuring rainfall and water volume; a camping stove, a rice cooker, canned meat, and more than sixty bottles of Sichuan hot sauce; a digital camera, a deck of cards, and several CDs of Tibetan music; and as many canisters of fuel as his team could strap to the roofs of their SUVs. No roads cross the part of China to which Yong was traveling, so he also brought topographical charts and satellite photos of the region. His final destination, deep in China's wild western frontier, was the unmarked place on the Tibetan plateau from which the Yangtze River springs.

For several weeks the two vehicles followed the Yangtze west, as the river turned from running water to ice. The thermometer became useless when the temperature dipped below the lowest reading on its scale. Occasionally they spotted an antelope, and once wolves devoured their fresh yak meat. As they climbed in elevation, tracing the course the Yangtze had cut through the Dangla Mountains many millennia ago, the air grew thinner and the wind fiercer. When the ground rose too steeply into the surrounding peaks for the SUVs to maneuver along the riverbanks, they drove on the frozen river itself, though this approach was not without its perils. About a month into their trip, on the auspicious first day of the Lunar New Year, Yong heard a great crunching sound as his front and then back tires slid through the ice, trapping his vehicle midstream. Fortunately, the vehicle wasn't too far submerged, and the backseat passengers managed to clamber out and signal to the second SUV. With a rope tied to the rear bumper, they dragged the vehicle from the frozen river, with Yong still in the driver's seat, transmission in reverse.

Yong and his companions made it safely out of the river. But since then he's continued to travel, in many senses, on thin ice. A vital question had propelled his journey up the Yangtze: the Chinese government is embarking on the most

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colossal water diversion project ever attempted, and Yong had taken it upon himself to discover whether it would work.

Water is an unevenly distributed resource in China. Traditionally, the south has been lush while the north has been a land of dry tundra and frozen desert. In 1952, Mao Zedong conjured a solution to this inequity: "Southern water is plentiful, northern water scarce," he said. "Borrowing some water would be good." Ever since, China's leaders have dreamed of diverting water from one of the country's great rivers to the other—from the southern Yangtze River into the northern Yellow River. (To fathom the scale of this undertaking, imagine watering the American Southwest by diverting the Mississippi River into the Colorado.)

In recent years, this eccentric scheme has become increasingly appealing to Chinese authorities, as water shortages in northern cities have become more and more dire. In 2002, China's highest executive body, the State Council, converted Mao's grandiose notion into a plan known as the South-to-North Water Transfer Project. Construction on two sections of the project have already begun, but the most ambitious stage is scheduled to begin by 2010. This phase will divert water from the Yangtze in southwestern China to the north, across mountains that rise to 15,000 feet above sea level. The entire project will cost at least an estimated $60.4 billion, and has aroused intense opposition because it is expected to displace hundreds of thousands of people and devastate fragile ecosystems.

Between January and March, Yong's team traveled more than 16,000 miles in the Yangtze River basin, threading every bend in the western reaches of the river. The previous summer they had driven roughly the same route, so they could compare water levels in different seasons. On both trips they collected data on rainfall, geology, receding glaciers, and other trends that affect the volume of water in the river. Yong had learned from firsthand experience that for about four months each year the upper Yangtze is a ribbon of ice; only an engineering miracle could transport the frozen water north. After he spent the summer and fall compiling data and circulating it among several dozen peer-researchers for feedback, he found more reasons to be skeptical of the ability of the project to live up to the government's vision. The bounteous stream of Beijing's imagination became, in Yong's careful calculations, a trickle.

The fact that Yong is free to conduct such inquiries at all says much about the recent political evolution of China. Fifteen years ago, the government wouldn't have tolerated public questioning of large-scale infrastructure projects. But in recent years, criticism from independent scientists and environmental organizations has prompted the government to postpone two planned western dam projects. In September, officials even acknowledged (after the fact) that unsound planning for the controversial Three Gorges Dam project had created a potential "environmental catastrophe." This isn't a sign that China's Communist Party is throwing the country's political system open to full democratic participation. But China's leaders know that a rapidly deteriorating environment could stall the country's economic miracle and ignite political unrest, and so they're experimenting with limited openness to help avert these hazards. It remains an open question, however, just how much scrutiny the government will tolerate, and how much impact Yong will be permitted to have. His midwinter expedition was only the first stage of his odyssey into uncharted terrain.

On my first visit to Beijing, last spring, I wheezed all the way from the airport to my hotel. The thick smog hid any hint of direct sunlight, and for a week I didn't see my shadow. When I returned in mid-October, the city appeared to be a changed place. I was surprised to see clear blue skies. Skyscrapers were visible from a distance, not shrouded in haze. There were other changes, too—swept sidewalks, a sudden absence of bootleg DVD hawkers, more policemen on the streets.

A week later, the city looked, sounded, and smelled like her familiar self again. The street vendors were back, along with the curbside cobblers and the men waving *Bourne Identity 3* DVDs. The skies were gray, the sun obscured, and cigarette butts and orange peels once again speckled the sidewalks.

The temporary makeover had coincided—not accidentally—with the Seventeenth Communist Party Congress, the meeting of party bigwigs that happens once every five years and attracts numerous domestic and international visitors. During the congress, the central government, eager to punctuate its new talk of environmental protection with some proof of its commitment, had directed its might toward cleaning up a targeted area for a discrete period of time, reportedly putting regional factories and Beijing's public vehicles on a compulsory holiday. The results were eerily impressive. (Expect an encore for the 2008 Olympics.) But the greater significance of this fleeting transformation was that it exposed the limits of the party's power. The central government can clamp down abruptly and indomitably, but it can't do so everywhere, all the time.

As I wrote in these pages last summer ("The Green Leap Forward," July/August 2007), China's political leaders have in recent years embraced the environmental cause, not out of sentiment or idealism but as a matter of survival. China's environment is becoming so degraded that it risks choking off the country's booming economy: the West balks at buying mercury-contaminated grain, while water shortages threaten Chinese paper mills and petrochemical plants. Also at risk is the country's political stability: peasant riots over land seizures and polluted rivers are becoming increasingly common (see "Pollution Revolution," page 42). But while the central government has issued stern directives aimed at reducing air and water pollution, it lacks the means to enforce them. That's because, in order to promote economic growth over the last three decades, Beijing has gradually relinquished certain types of authority to provincial governments. The result has been dramatic gains in the country's gross domestic product, with new factories multiplying across the countryside. However,

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provincial autonomy has also enabled local officials to ignore cumbersome central directives, including regulations on matters ranging from food safety to environmental standards.

Understanding their diminished ability to enforce green statutes locally, China's leaders have turned cautiously to civil society for assistance. Since 1994, Beijing has empowered nongovernmental groups to expose polluting factories. Today there are more than 3,000 citizen green groups in China. In 2003 and 2004, the government enacted laws requiring environmental impact assessments and citizen input on major public works projects. (These measures took effect shortly after construction commenced on the first two phases of the water transfer project.) In 2005, China's first national public hearing—over the fate of the Old Summer Palace—was broadcast on national television. Progressive environmental officials are introducing the concepts of "public participation," "hearings," and "rights" to the public. Environmental lawyers are litigating China's first successful class-action lawsuits. Compared to a decade ago, the situation is remarkable.

Still, there are limits to the government's spirit of reform, and perhaps some in the party feel they've been moving too fast. Around the time of high-profile events like the Party Congress, the flashpoints become more apparent. For instance, the first promotion resulting from the congress was Li Yuanchao, former party secretary of Jiangsu Province, who was elevated to a seat on the Politburo, the inner circle of Chinese leadership. In announcing his ascent, newspapers extolled Li's "environmental" record. A few months earlier, however, his province had shut off water to 4 million people for a week because chemical pollution and algae blooms had turned the local water source, Lake Tai, a brilliant pea green. An environmental activist named Wu Lihong had tried to alert the authorities and the public to the problem. For his trouble, he was arrested on the orders of local officials and sentenced to three years in prison. (His case was recently written up in the *New York Times*.) To many observers, it seemed odd that Wu was silenced while more prominent environmentalists were allowed to operate freely. But Wen Bo, a veteran environmentalist in Beijing, decoded the message for me: Wu was thrown in jail for questioning the real record of Li's Jiangsu government. "Li is a protégé of Hu Jintao," Wen said. "Jiangsu Province is the stronghold of Hu Jintao. If that area is quiet, their power-hold is strong."

The government does want citizen groups to help combat pollution, and it has created an opening for them to do so. But political power in China is still wielded behind closed doors, and that opening can constrict without warning when an activist crosses the agenda of an influential official. It is within this unpredictable sphere that Yong Yang is attempting to operate.

This October, I spoke with the forty-nine-year-old Yong in Beijing. (We first met last spring in western Sichuan Province.) He had thick black hair and hadn't shaved for a day or two. He was dressed in a black jacket, a gray sweater, and black jeans. Despite his rugged appearance and the adventurous nature of his research, his eyes seemed more sad than rebellious. "I am not against the government," he explained, snuffing out what was likely his sixth or seventh cigarette of the evening. "What I want is to get the facts."

In Yong's hotel room, we hunched over his laptop to look at slides from his trip. There were photos of his SUV crashing through the ice; of someone pouring hot water from a teakettle to defrost the engine's water tank; of Tibetan herders who offered Yong and his colleagues meat and milk along the way.

Then Yong opened a spreadsheet. On one side was a series of estimates, based on Yong's research, of the volume of water in the Yangtze. On the other side were the official estimates prepared by the government's Yellow River Conservancy Commission. The government data was supposed to be secret, but Yong had obtained it from a network of friends and former colleagues inside the government.

Can a limited form of public participation help China avert environmental ruin? Or are independent oversight, the rule of law, and the ability to vote out bad officials essential components of effective environmental protection?

Yong found that the official figures were often "way off." In one section of the river, the government's plans call for diverting between 8 and 9 billion cubic meters of water north each year. However, Yong's research—supported by thirty years' worth of reports from hydrology monitoring stations—indicates that the average annual water flow for that section includes a low estimate of 7 billion cubic meters. This means that when the river flow is low, the government would be hoping to divert an amount of water *greater* than the total volume in the river. Moreover, no sound engineering plan should call for redirecting all of the water in a river, since downstream communities, including Shanghai, will still depend upon the Yangtze for agriculture, industry, and hydropower.

Yong is not alone in doubting the feasibility of the final section of the South-to-North Water Transfer Project. More than fifty scientists in Sichuan contributed to a 2006 book, *South-to-North Water Transfer Project Western Route Memorandums*. The collection of scientific articles and reports raises serious concerns about construction at high altitudes, seismic stability, pollution in the Yangtze, climate change (the river's volume

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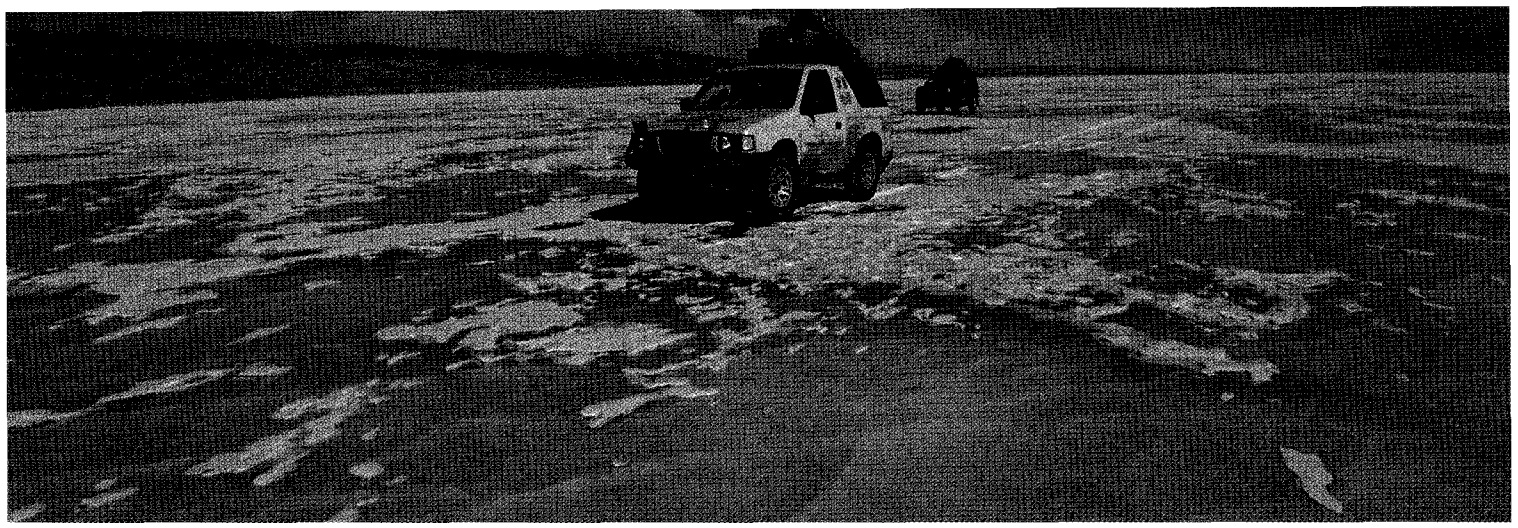

Brittle expedition: Yong Yang's team drove on the frozen surface of the upper Yangtze, at one point crashing through the ice.

is expected to diminish as Tibet's glaciers melt), and the potential for reduced river flow to shut down hundreds of downstream hydropower stations, perhaps inflicting blackouts on millions. According to one former government researcher, there are even critics within the Ministry of Water Resources.

Why are the official projections so fantastically optimistic? Yong, who once worked as a government scientist in the Ministry of Coal Industry, thinks he has some idea of how the numbers were produced. "The government, they will make a goal," he explained. "Then their researchers think their job is just to say it works. Everybody will just say the good word, and try to find data to support it," he said, shrugging. "It's not a very scientific way of doing research."

Yong says he has asked the Yellow River Conservancy Commission how they arrived at their figures, but their staffers have refused to respond. "They just emphasize that there won't be much problem," he said. (My request for an interview with the commission was referred to the Water Ministry's Propaganda Department, where an official said that no one would be available for comment for at least two months.) No matter whose figures are correct, what worries Yong most is that there is no independent system in place to determine whether such a colossal and disruptive undertaking will work.

Yet informed sources say that the project has a champion in retired President Jiang Zemin—still a powerful force in Chinese politics—and a handful of influential retired army officers. And many entrenched interests have a reason to hope that construction proceeds. The steering committee that manages the water transfer project is led by Premier Wen Jiabao, and its members include high-ranking officials from the national government. A similar bureaucracy has been replicated in affected provinces, creating hundreds of titles and salaries dedicated to moving the project forward. Five state banks have major investments in the plan, and expect loans to be repaid when water user fees are assessed. The two companies with multibillion-dollar contracts to build the early phases of the project are hungry for more. Yet the environmental impact assessment required by the 2003 law has still not been released, and the real deliberative battle over the project remains invisible.

The perennial unreliability of information pervades all aspects of China's environmental protection system, from water management to pollution control. Dr. Zhao Jianping, sector coordinator for energy in the World Bank's China Office, for example, told me he was dubious of the government's ability to achieve its goal of having 15 percent of China's energy come from renewable sources by 2020. Having looked at the official plans, he told me that Beijing's characterization of the potential of wind energy was somewhat realistic, but the discussion of biomass potential was, in his judgment, wishful thinking. "In most other countries, you do the analysis first, then set goals," he said. "In China, you set the goal first, then you do the research and set the policy to try to achieve it."

Similarly, Yang Fuqiang, vice president of the Energy Foundation, a research center and partnership of major international donors, told me about Beijing's efforts to stem rising coal consumption. To monitor progress, the central government relies on local cadres to report the number of new mines, but these officials often give faulty estimates—either for lack of accurate information or out of a desire to please Beijing. "Collecting reliable data is a major challenge," Yang said. There are no independent watchdogs to verify official statistics, which, unsurprisingly, often turn out to be wrong. In 2003, Beijing went back to review prior estimates of annual coal consumption, and discovered that its estimates for 2000 had failed to account for 50 million tons of coal burned—"a rather large oversight," Yang remarked.

Optimists say that what China needs most is more technical training for its officials: to ensure that regional administrators are better equipped to count coal mines, and local lawyers and judges understand the nuances of new environmental laws. China does need those things. But others are beginning to think that further changes are needed, too.

One person who has helped fund Yong Yang's research is Dr. Yu Xiaogang, founder of the nonprofit organization Green Watershed. Yu is also the architect of the greatest success story of Chinese environmentalism to date. In 2004, he coordinated opposition to a proposed series of dam projects on China's last wild river, the Nu. (Activists and scientists presented convincing evidence that the dam would have had a ruinous

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effect on local communities and ecosystems.) After a sustained campaign, Premier Jiabao personally suspended the project, pending a new environmental impact assessment. When I visited Green Watershed's offices in western Yunnan Province, Yu surprised me when he said that his success was only temporary. "There will always be another dam proposal, another financier," he explained. He said he wants a reliable process for gathering public and expert input while plans are being drafted, not when the bulldozers are ready to roll.

"What we have got to do," Yu said, "is change the system." The veteran environmentalist Wen Bo also told me, "For China's environment to improve, I think the political system needs to change. I don't know exactly what the future needs to look like, but it needs to be *more* democratic, more free society, more free media."

In America, the popular and political momentum for creating our modern environmental apparatus was inspired by the work of a scientist, Rachel Carson, who challenged conventional wisdom and official policies governing the use of pesticides. After Congress passed a series of landmark environmental laws in the 1970s, independent environmental lawyers ensured that those statutes were upheld by suing the government when it failed to enforce legislation such as the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act. When Washington has dragged its feet, independent scientists and reporters have uncovered White House obfuscations and pushed for government action. Every industrialized country—apart from Singapore, a green authoritarian city-state—that has cleaned up its environment has done so with the help of civil society and a free press.

In countries where the government hasn't been able to control pollution, environmental crises have sometimes helped spur momentum for broader political change. Two decades ago, many in eastern Europe had grown resigned to life under a repressive government. That changed on April 26, 1986, when a nuclear reactor exploded at the Chernobyl power plant in the former Soviet Union, sending vastly more radiation into the air than an atomic bomb. In downwind Poland and Slovenia, uproar over nuclear reactors and official secrecy (the state presses initially refused to report on the disaster) provoked the first mass demonstrations against the government. "Chernobyl [alone] did not topple Communism," Padraic Kenney wrote in *A Carnival of Revolution*, a history of democracy movements in the former Soviet bloc. "But it became a popular symbol of government breakdown, a rallying cry for dissenters, a wake-up call for the population at large ... and helped galvanize dissent in the years leading up to 1989."

Another case—closer to home for the Chinese—is Taiwan. The country was under martial law until 1986; any kind of open political opposition to the ruling Kuomintang Party was strictly forbidden. As long as the government was delivering security and economic growth, the middle class tolerated one-party rule. Then the effects of environmental problems began to affect their daily lives. The dissident groups that later became the Democratic Progressive Party first coalesced around environmental issues, especially air pollution and opposition to nuclear power. One former U.S. embassy official told me, "Pollution was the one issue Taiwan's middle class couldn't tolerate."

China's leaders are aware of these historical parallels. David Lampton, the director of the China studies program at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, explained Beijing's conundrum: "The Chinese are caught between the logic of what they know they need to effectively implement environmental policy, and the fear of whether these groups could become the opening wedge to political liberalization."

During my time in China I often found myself wondering whether Beijing's experiment could succeed. Can a limited form of public participation help avert environmental ruin? Or are independent oversight, the rule of law, and the ability to vote out bad officials essential components of effective environmental protection?

The Chinese government is embarking on the most colossal water diversion project ever attempted. Independent geologist Yong Yang has data suggesting the project won't work.

Perhaps China will, once again, elide the apparent contradictions of its environmental politics in the same way that it has somehow melded capitalism and communism. Or perhaps smoggy cities, dwindling water supplies, and peasant protests over pollution will force the party to accept greater political openness. Or perhaps the environmental activists themselves will call for it. Whatever happens, the consequences will be epic. If China continues on its current course, within twenty-five years it will emit twice the carbon dioxide of all the OECD countries combined. The Middle Kingdom's dilemma is ours, too.

For now, China's environmental politics have a slightly schizophrenic quality. This summer, for instance, Beijing police shut down a long-running national environmental Web site, China Development Brief, which had pages in both Chinese and English and was closely monitored by experts inside and outside the country. Observers speculate that authorities were worried about the site's role as a hub for green groups to network nationally without any kind of state supervision. In October, however, the State Environmental

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Protection Administration sanctioned a national conference of green NGOs, which gave environmentalists the opportunity to conduct their national networking in person.

I attended the conference in Beijing, and saw representatives of more than 300 citizen groups from across China behaving anything but furtively, exchanging business cards and debating President Hu's environmental theories in nearby restaurants. A few government officials showed up on the first morning to commend the work of notable attendees and encourage citizens toward greater "public participation" in environmental protection. The program of speakers had been approved by the government, but as one participant told me, "The most important thing is not the schedule, but the chance to meet other environmentalists from everywhere in China." Some of the activists I spoke to said they wanted to be a "bridge" between the government and the public, helping to disseminate information about green priorities, while others said they wanted a greater role in setting or overseeing policy. Nearly all of them mentioned "the line"—the boundary between safe and potentially punishable forms of advocacy—which is perceived differently by the government and the public and fluctuates with changing political tides.

Yong Yang was at the conference too. He debuted a new PowerPoint presentation of his research, sharing information and gathering feedback. Having failed to open a direct line of communication with the government, he is now trying to telegraph his concern about the South-to-North Water Transfer Project through informal networks. (Over the summer, he had spoken with a reporter for the *South China Morning Post*, but the article was never published because, he thinks, it was scheduled to appear right before the National Party Congress.)

Although Yong's activities appear to bring him into increasingly open conflict with the government, he insists that his aim is not political—he sees himself as a scientist first, an environmentalist second. ("Science," he told me, "is the most damning kind of criticism.") Still, he is aware that his work is, as he put it, "a direct challenge to the system—to the government's decision-making process, and to the interest groups that benefit from it."

Yong has walked the line before. Two years ago, while researching power stations along the Min River, local business interests attempted—unsuccessfully—to silence him with bribes and threats. I asked if he was ever nervous for his safety. "Once you make up your mind to do this," he told me, "you have to be prepared for everything that happens." WM

Christina Larson is an editor of the *Washington Monthly*. She traveled to China in the spring and fall of 2007. Her research was supported by the International Reporting Project at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. Photographs by Liu Yan. Research assistance provided by Yang Yang in Beijing.

Pollution Revolution

In 2005, China was shaken by 51,000 pollution-triggered "public disturbances"—demonstrations or riots of a hundred or more people protesting the contamination of rivers and farms—according to the government's own statistics. (The real figures are almost certainly higher.) The Ministry of Public Security has ranked pollution among the top five threats to China's peace and stability.

One hotbed of such environmental unrest is Hunan Province, a former stronghold of Sun Yat-Sen's anti-imperial forces and the birthplace of Mao Zedong. This southern province has twice nurtured agitated peasant movements that have risen against the central government.

In October, I met the unlikely instigator of a pollution riot: an unassuming forty-seven-year-old farmer named Chen Li Fang. With her husband, Chen grows rice and raises pigs, chickens, and ducks in the village of Shutangshan, in northeastern Hunan. In 2001, a chemical processing plant opened less than a mile from their farm. The owner of the factory had first considered setting up shop in a neighboring town, but the local government badly wanted to attract both the jobs and tax revenue. According to *China Economic Times*, it offered the owner of the Hunan Jingtian Science and Technology Company generous financial incentives to open its plant there.

By 2003, Chen and other villagers had compiled a troubling list of problems that had materialized since the factory opened. Dozens of people reported stomach pains, migraine headaches, and vomiting. Local media reported ten new cases of cancer among people who lived within a mile and a half of the factory—an alarming number for a village of only a few hundred people. Farmers watched their cattle die and rice yields decline. Chen and other villagers believed that wastewater discharged from the factory had poisoned the Xiang River, a source for drinking water and irrigation, and that the dark smoke rising from the plant's chimney had fouled the air. (The factory owner insisted to the local press that while his plant had pollution problems, the villagers' ailments could not be traced conclusively to its emissions.)

Groups of villagers visited the factory repeatedly to talk to the management, requesting that the emissions-control equipment be upgraded or the most polluting production lines be discontinued. The owner offered small payments to those who complained loudest—enough to temporarily placate poor farmers, if not enough to cover their losses. Gradually, even those who were initially satisfied with their compen-

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sation demanded that the factory close. They also petitioned the environmental protection bureaus of Wangcheng County, where the factory is located, and nearby Changsha City, but officials approved the factory to continue operations.

Having exhausted peaceful channels, the villagers turned to force. Twice in the summer of 2004, more than a hundred residents marched onto factory grounds to disconnect its electricity. Chen Li Fang organized the second effort. She split the villagers into two groups, with the first storming the front gates, the second approaching from behind. The manager cowered in his office and called the police. Someone ripped the power-supply unit off the wall. The factory was shut down for three days before the equipment could be replaced. Chen served a short jail term.

But Chen was undeterred, feeling that she had less and less to lose. In January 2006, she traveled to Beijing for the first time. She camped for two weeks in a train station's waiting room as she struggled to get an audience with the national environmental ministry. Finally, she met with an official from the State Environmental Protection Administration, China's understaffed and overstretched version of the EPA, and was sent home with a letter directing the provincial government to examine her case. Nothing much changed.

In November she returned to Beijing, but this time she met with an organization of public-interest lawyers, the Center for Legal Assistance to Pollution Victims. Founded in 1998, the center is staffed by volunteers—mostly law professors and young law students—and operates a free legal advice hotline. Since it launched, it has fielded about 10,000 calls. Lawyers from the center have personally taken up more than eighty callers' cases; they've won a third of those cases, lost a third, and a third are still pending.

China has had environmental laws on the books for thirty years, but teaching citizens to use them is a relatively new enterprise. So, too, is the expectation that laws should be enforced. Local environmental officials have surprisingly limited authority to implement Beijing's green regulations, as these cadres receive both their orders and their salaries from local government, which has an economic interest in shielding local industry. In recent years, growing pollution concerns have prompted Beijing to pass stricter environmental legislation, including a 2003 law that requires factories gain approval for onetime "environmental impact assessment" reports from local authorities. At the moment, China's officials face what may appear to them to be an uneasy choice: allow citizens to use these laws to their fullest extent, or risk a precipitous rise in protests. The environmental minister said in 2005 that pollution-related protests had increased in recent years by an annual rate of 29 percent.

In 2003, the factory in Chen's village submitted the requisite report detailing its projected environmental impact and plans for pollution control, which the local environmental protection bureau then approved. But according to Zhou Guangming, an environmental lawyer who has examined the document, the report was flawed and misleading. Most obviously, the report claimed that no wastewater would be discharged directly into the Xiang River, although a walk around the factory grounds reveals a pipe that does exactly that.

Rather than planning another raid, Chen and other villagers—aided by their new allies in Beijing—are preparing a lawsuit that would force local officials to shut down the factory. In 2007, Xu Kezhu, an attorney from the legal aid center, visited the village. She collected evidence of factory conditions and interviewed residents, environmental officials, and plant workers. When the factory owner bragged that some of his technology had been imported from the United States, she retorted, "If you learned about commercial processes from America, why did you not also learn about environmental protection processes from America?" Inspired by the U.S. system, in which Sierra Club lawyers routinely sue the EPA for administrative breaches, Xu plans to sue the local environmental protection bureau for rubber-stamping what she deems a faulty environmental-impact report. As she told me, it is easier to definitively prove administrative failure than to establish a direct link between the factory's emissions and the illnesses suffered by the villagers. The lawsuit is shaping up to be a test of China's tentative collection of environmental laws and accompanying oversight mechanisms.

I visited the factory one Sunday afternoon in late October, when the plant was closed for the weekend. But the metal gate wasn't locked, and Chen's husband, who has visited dozens of times, led me onto the premises for a tour. (He told me that when he last spoke to the factory owner, he was told, "It [would be] a good thing for you to be dead." That hasn't cowed him.) The walls inside the factory were black with soot; the equipment was rusty and looked poorly maintained. Sacks of chemical additives, ready to be shipped to customers, sat beside rusted barrels that oozed dark liquid onto the floor.

We were accompanied that afternoon by several villagers, all shouting. Each had a complaint to air. "We cannot endure anymore," yelled Li Qiu Liang, whose father-in-law has spent the last five years unable to work; she claims pollution has made him sick. A sixty-six-year-old farmer, Wen Yun Kai, showed me a series of wrinkled letters he'd sent to local environmental officials after his cattle became sick and died; a local veterinarian had "verified" his claims and written at the bottom, "It is truth." A sixty-year-old fisherman, Xiao Xiang Lin, said his nets were empty because the Xiang River had "no more fish."

Chen's husband and I also followed the pipeline that led from the wastewater holding basin into the river, a few hundred meters away. This is the pipeline the environmental impact report claims doesn't exist. Then he showed me a hole in the pipe where the villagers had smashed it open in order to confirm the presence of wastewater inside.

For the moment, the villagers are placing their faith in the lawyers. "I want them to make the law work," Chen told me, sitting at a table in her modest home. "If there is no government action to solve the problem, I will go to Beijing, again and again." Chen isn't going away—and nor are millions like her—until the problem does.—*C.L.*

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The Army's Other Crisis

Why the best and brightest young officers are leaving

By Andrew Tilghman

Matt Kapinos was born into the military, at a U.S. Army hospital outside Frankfurt, Germany It was 1979, and his father was an Army officer, one of thousands of soldiers stationed along the plains of central Europe. Kapinos moved around a lot growing up—thirteen places in all, including upstate New York, Tennessee, Georgia, Kansas, and Korea. From his perspective, these locations all appeared pretty much the same. No matter where he lived, at 5 p.m. everyone paused as the American flag was lowered to the sound of a bugle. He attended schools run by the Defense Department, where many of the teachers were married to soldiers, and where military police chaperoned the school bus at times of heightened security. It wasn't until he was a high school junior that his family first lived "off post." His father, then a colonel, got a job at the Pentagon, and so the family moved to Springfield, Virginia. Unsurprisingly, by then Kapinos could imagine only one career for himself: he wanted to be an officer in the Army.

One spring afternoon in his senior year, Kapinos came home from track practice to find a FedEx envelope on the doorstep. It contained his acceptance to the military academy at West Point, the alma mater of great American generals going back to Ulysses S. Grant. Kapinos's father, who had also attended West Point, "tried to let me know what I was getting into, that you lose a little bit of control over your

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life and that the Army is not always fun and games," Kapinos recalled. "[But] my dad always pushed us to, you know, do something to contribute. I guess I wanted to do something that seeks glory, to do great things."

Kapinos thrived during his four years in New York's Hudson Valley. In particular, he loved learning the history of warfare, including twentieth-century counterinsurgencies—the French in Algeria, the British in Malaysia, the Americans in Vietnam. As a cadet, he excelled in the military training program. He was one of only six graduating students to wear six bars on his lapel and earn the title of cadet regimental commander. He graduated near the top of his class, one of the Army's most talented recruits.

A few months before September 11, 2001, Kapinos began training to jump out of a plane with a rifle and a rucksack. By then, he was a platoon leader assigned to an elite unit of paratroopers in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. About forty enlisted men were placed under his command. In early 2003, they followed Kapinos aboard a C-130 plane bound for Khost, Afghanistan, a border town nestled below snow-capped peaks in a valley stretching east into Pakistan.

Kapinos was placed in charge of a "firebase," an abandoned Afghan home where he lived with his soldiers and patrolled local villages. At first, he loved the work. "I felt like this was what I'd always wanted to do," he told me. An air assault mission in the spring of 2003 was particularly exhilarating. He and his soldiers flew into a remote valley, streamed out of Black Hawk helicopters, and encircled the home of an insurgent leader who had been accused of killing a Red Cross worker. Rifles raised, they kicked in the doors and found the man, wearing a tan turban and a traditional cotton gown, and in possession of a stash of weapons and $10,000 in U.S. currency.

But from his reading of military history, Kapinos understood that fighting a counterinsurgency is about more than catching bad guys. He made an effort to build rapport with locals, even though no instructor had ever suggested that he do so. He requested medical supplies for local village leaders when no supplies had been provided. He told his soldiers to be cautious before using deadly force, and he scolded them for making derogatory remarks about the local Pashtun Muslims.

Kapinos returned to Fort Bragg in late 2003. His wife, Katherine—a smart University of Virginia graduate with career plans of her own—was relieved. They'd married the previous year and had hardly seen each other since. After a few months, they'd started to settle into married life. Then, at a holiday party for officers and their wives, a loose-lipped sergeant major revealed that the battalion was leaving for Iraq in two weeks. Matt and Katherine's first Christmas together was an anxious one.

Before boarding the plane for Iraq, Kapinos was promoted again. At the age of twenty-four, he was helping to lead a company of nearly 200 soldiers. In Iraq, he oversaw security at Camp Anaconda, one of the largest U.S. air bases in Iraq, home to tens of thousands of soldiers and contractors. From a high-tech command post, he monitored grainy video screens, spotting insurgents erecting mortar tubes and dispatching quick reaction units to kill or capture them.

Kapinos was accumulating lessons afforded few West Point graduates of recent generations—the chance to experience real war as a young lieutenant. Still, he was feeling frustrated. He worried that his superiors were slow to grasp the complex nature of counterinsurgency. In Afghanistan, he had suggested that instead of merely conducting nighttime raids, his men should camp in small villages to help local leaders root out insurgents and their sympathizers. His commanders repeatedly rejected the idea. In Iraq, he was full of similarly innovative proposals, but felt his commanders disregarded his input. "After a while, you just stop asking," he said.

Kapinos was questioning the Army's conventional wisdom at a time when it urgently needed independent thinkers. Indeed, as the Iraq and Afghanistan missions have floundered, the Army has begun to turn to unorthodox leaders who look beyond heavy artillery and tank battles. General David Petraeus is the best example of this; in the 1980s, while other ambitious career officers were stationed in Germany pointing tank brigades at the Fulda Gap, Petraeus was at Princeton studying counterinsurgencies and questioning military doctrine for his doctoral thesis, "The American Military and the Lessons of Vietnam: A Study of Military Influence and the Use of Force in the Post-Vietnam Era." Kapinos, who was similarly absorbed by both the practice of war and its more intellectual aspects, was rising swiftly through the ranks at the moment when the Army needed him most.

Kapinos, however, is no longer in the Army. Fifteen days after his initial five-year service agreement expired, he left military life entirely. When I met him, it was near the downtown campus of the Georgetown University Law Center, where he was taking a break from classes on corporate income tax law. Tall and fit, with close-cropped sandy brown hair and a green cable-knit sweater, he resembled both the lawyer he is preparing to be and the Army captain he once was. "I was a true believer at West Point. When Afghanistan kicked off, I don't want to say I bought the propaganda, but I wanted to change the world," he said. "I thought I was going to be a four-star general."

For several years now, we've been hearing alarming warnings about the strain that the Iraq War has placed on the military. Since the conflict began, around 40 percent of the Army and Marine Corps' large-scale equipment has been used, worn out, or destroyed. Last year, the Army had to grant waivers to nearly one in five recruits because they had criminal records. There are no more combat-ready brigades left on standby should a new conflict flare.

These problems are of vital concern, and are reasonably well understood in newsrooms and on Capitol Hill. But the top uniformed and civilian leaders at the Pentagon who think hardest about the future of the military have a more fundamental fear: young officers—people like Matt Kapinos—are leaving the Army at nearly their highest rates in

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decades. This is not a short-term problem, nor is it one that can simply be fixed with money. A private-sector company or another government agency can address a shortage of middle managers by hiring more middle managers. In the Army's rigid hierarchy, all officers start out at the bottom, as second lieutenants. A decline in officer retention, in other words, threatens both the Army's current missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its long-term institutional future. And though many senior Pentagon leaders are quite aware of the problem, there's only so much they can do to reverse the decline while the United States maintains large numbers of troops in Iraq.

In the last four years, the exodus of junior officers from the Army has accelerated. In 2003, around 8 percent of junior officers with between four and nine years of experience left for other careers. Last year, the attrition rate leapt to 13 percent. "A five percent change could potentially be a serious problem," said James Hosek, an expert in military retention at the RAND Corporation. Over the long term, this rate of attrition would halve the number of officers who reach their tenth year in uniform and intend to take senior leadership roles.

There is less competition for promotions, and less-able candidates are rising to the top. "If you breathe, you make lieutenant colonel these days," one retired colonel grumbled.

But the problem isn't one of numbers alone: the Army also appears to be losing its most gifted young officers. In 2005, internal Army memos started to warn of the "disproportionate loss of high-potential, high-performance junior leaders." West Point graduates are leaving at their highest rates since the 1970s (except for a few years in the early 1990s when the Army's goal was to reduce its size). Of the nearly 1,000 cadets from the class of 2002, 58 percent are no longer on active duty.

This means that there is less competition for promotions, and that less-able candidates are rising to the top. For years, Congress required the Army to promote only 70 to 80 percent of eligible officers. Under that law, the rank of major served as a useful funnel by which the Army separated out the bottom quarter of the senior officer corps. On September 14, 2001, President Bush suspended that requirement. Today, more than 98 percent of eligible captains are promoted to major. "If you breathe, you make lieutenant colonel these days," one retired colonel grumbled to me.

The dismay of senior leaders at this situation pierces through even the dry, bureaucratic language of Army memoranda. In an internal document distributed among senior commanders earlier this year, Colonel George Lockwood, the director of officer personnel management for the Army's Human Resources Command, wrote, "The Army is facing significant challenges in officer manning, now and in the immediate future." Lockwood was referring to an anticipated shortfall of about 3,000 captains and majors until at least 2013; he estimated that the Army already has only about half the senior captains that it needs. "Read the last line again, please," Lockwood wrote. "Our inventory of senior captains is only 51 percent of requirement." In response to this deficit, the Army is taking in twenty-two-year-olds as fast as it can. However, these recruits can't be expected to perform the jobs of officers who have six to eight years of experience. "New 2nd Lieutenants," Lockwood observed, "are no substitute for senior captains."

Even the pool from which the Army draws its future leaders is being diluted. Last year, the Army commissioned more officers as second lieutenants than it has since 1989, when the Pentagon was still planning for a cold war–era force nearly 50 percent larger than the current one. (The commissioning figures are partially a reflection of the Army's restructuring efforts since 2002, which created a greater number of smaller combat units and increased the need for junior officers.)

Those new officers, however, are not coming from the traditional sources of West Point and ROTC programs, which supply recruits fresh from college. Instead, they are coming from the Army's Officer Candidate School—mostly attended by soldiers plucked from the enlisted ranks, who probably entered the military straight from high school. The number of OCS graduates has more than tripled since the late 1990s, from about 400 a year to more than 1,500 a year. These soldiers may turn out to be good commissioned officers. But they are also needed in the noncommissioned officer (NCO) corps, the parallel structure of senior-level sergeants who form the Army's backbone, responsible for ensuring that orders are effectively carried out, rather than making policy or strategic decisions. Yet the Army is already several thousand sergeants short and has been reducing NCO promotion times in order to fill the gaps. Sending more soldiers who are NCOs, or NCO material, to Officer Candidate School is merely robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Iraq, in one way or another, is a driving force behind many officers' decision to leave. For some, there's a nagging bitterness that the war's burden is falling overwhelmingly on men and women in uniform while the rest of the country largely ignores it. While many officers don't oppose the war itself, returning repeatedly to serve in Iraq is a grueling way to live. One of the many reasons for this is that it corrodes their families; the divorce rate among Army officers has tripled since 2003. Internal surveys show that the percentage of officers who cite "amount of time separated from family" as a primary factor for leaving the Army has at least

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doubled since 2002, to more than 30 percent. And family is a factor even for officers who don't have one yet. One young soldier I met at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, said his primary problem with military life was the difficulty of finding a girlfriend while spending more than half his time in Iraq. As officers prepare for a third or even fourth deployment, a new wave of discontent is expected to wash over junior leaders. Studies show that one deployment actually improves retention, as soldiers draw satisfaction from using their skills in the real world. Second deployments often have no effect on retention. It's the third deployment that begins to burn out soldiers. And a fourth? There's no large-scale historical precedent for military planners to examine—yet.

Still, the roots of the phenomenon of officer discontent go far deeper than multiple deployments or the war in Iraq. Since the 1970s, societal and cultural shifts have created a tough environment for the Army to attract and keep bright young officers.

After the Vietnam War, as the Army started to make the transition to a volunteer force, officers left the service in droves. Morale was miserable, and discipline was lacking. In 1980, Ronald Regan won the presidency promising to restore honor to the armed forces, and with an infusion of congressional funding officer retention improved during the rest of the decade. However, beginning in 1991, with the cold war over, Washington moved to reduce the size of the Army by about 40 percent. The Army in turn actively encouraged young officers to leave, and whittled down West Point and ROTC classes. The drawdown likely masked any mounting retention problems.

An all-volunteer military has few tools at its disposal to staunch the loss of high-grade officers—especially if the war in Iraq continues much longer.

By the late 1990s, the Army had about 480,000 troops, and new complications had emerged. Without a major-league enemy like the Soviet Union, the Army felt less relevant. Other job opportunities were plentiful in a thriving economy. In 2000, nearly 15 percent of junior officers between their fourth and ninth year of service left the military, the highest rate since the 1970s; experts labeled this statistic a crisis. An upsurge of patriotism after September 11 briefly pushed retention rates back toward historic norms. But as the Iraq War has become increasingly unpopular, the cultural factors that underpinned the exodus of the 1990s are again driving officers out of the service.

At the most basic level, being in the Army is a government job. Baby boomers were once drawn to the officer corps by cushy benefits and generous pension packages. But since the 1990s, an Army career has seemed less attractive in comparison with the lucrative opportunities available to a young, educated overachiever in corporate America. (The income of an Army officer with a college degree and twenty years of experience currently tops out at about $90,000.)

Money isn't necessarily the main factor in a junior officer's decision to quit. But military officers are constantly made aware of better-paid opportunities. Corporate recruiters view a combat deployment to Iraq as a highly marketable qualification, and often spam officers' in-boxes with job possibilities. This fall, I attended a job fair in Philadelphia where I saw about fifty junior officers in their late twenties, dressed smartly in business suits. All the officers I met expected to receive several offers of midlevel management positions in sectors such as manufacturing or construction, with salaries starting at around $70,000 with the potential of reaching six figures within several years. The recruiters, in turn, were excited by the officers' leadership and stress management skills. "We're looking for leadership," one recruiter for a commercial real estate management firm explained. "We can teach them the rest."

Another cause of officer discontent is the geography of Army life. A military career has always involved a rural lifestyle, since sparsely populated places provide more room to test artillery and simulate warfare. These locations appealed to baby boomers, who came of age when many American urban centers were in decay, and Army garrison towns like Fayetteville, North Carolina, evoked the feeling of the small towns in which many officers had grown up. Today, numerous coastal American cities have been revitalized, and they attract the most educated and ambitious young men and women, many of whom grew up in suburbs. Meanwhile, Army towns like Killeen, Texas, or Watertown, New York, have devolved into impoverished, isolated outposts economically dependent on their military installations and notable mostly for a seedy proliferation of chain restaurants, pawnshops, and strip clubs.

Perhaps the most powerful new element affecting officers' willingness to stay in the Army is the shifting dynamic of marriage and the roles of men and women in the family. Even in the rather traditional realm of Army culture, fathers now expect to be more actively involved in raising their children, and women tend to be less deferential to their husband's career. Among baby boomers, officers' wives were usually homemakers. Today, however, many officers' wives are doctors or lawyers or have degrees in international affairs, and there are few opportunities for them in places like Kentucky or West Texas. Recently I met a former captain named Adam Ake, who had won a Rhodes scholarship after graduating first in his class from West Point in 1997. He spent seven years as a platoon leader in Korea, and wrote speeches for a three-star general at Fort Lewis in Washington State. Knowing he would be swept up into the Iraq deployment schedule, he reluctantly left active duty in 2004, due to the stress

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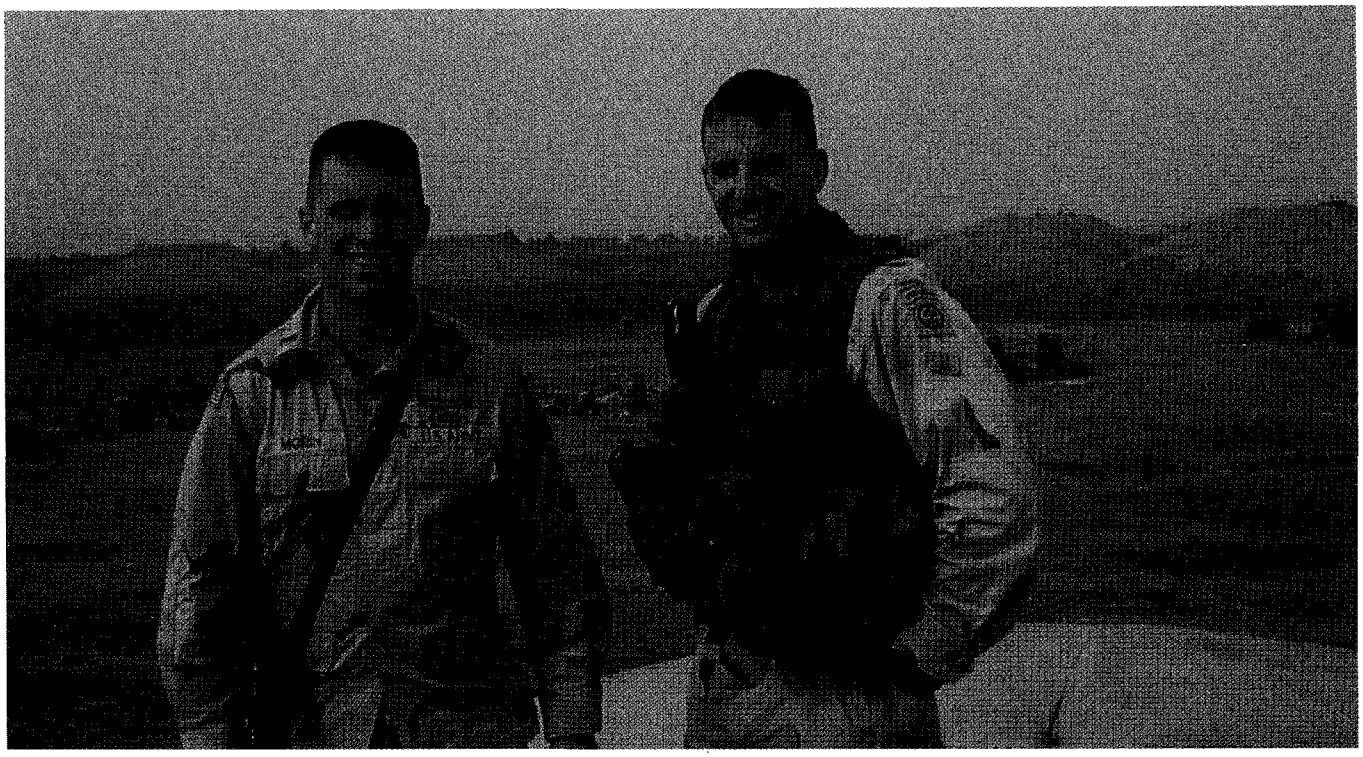

Brothers in arms: Jim Morin (on left) and Matt Kapinos served together in Iraq in 2004. Today, they study together at Georgetown law school.

Courtesy of Matt Kapinos

his service was placing on his family and his wife's career (she is an Army doctor at Walter Reed Hospital in Bethesda). "Something had to give," he said. He went to law school, and now clerks for a federal judge in Washington, D.C.

Over the past three months, I talked to numerous former officers around the country. What struck me most was their dissatisfaction with the way the Army leadership is managing the war, and the part that played in their decision to leave.

In Philadelphia, I met Zeke Austin, a twenty-eight-year-old former captain at Fort Hood, Texas, who left the Army after five years to look for a private-sector job. Austin first explained that he quit because his fiancée was finishing medical school and couldn't find a residency program in an Army town. Suddenly, he veered into a scathing critique of his commanders' preoccupation with institutional process. "Rather than focus on important stuff, they focus on PowerPoint slides. They'd have me up all night to make one slide a little prettier," he said. "After a while, you start to think, What am I doing over here?"

In Houston, I met an officer who had taken the rare step of leaving only eight years before he was due to retire. When I inquired why, he described a generation of senior leaders who gained experience in the relative calm of the 1980s, and seemed most comfortable in Iraq behind a desk. "What did these guys ever do? Go to Panama?" said the captain, who now makes more than $100,000 as a logistics manager for a petrochemical services company. "All they know how to do is train. So you're out in a firefight and they're complaining because you're not wearing eye protection. The colonel says 'Why don't you have your knee pads on?' and you're like, 'Shut the fuck up, I've got a guy bleeding over here.' That has a lot to do with it."

In Washington, I met Matt Kapinos and his longtime friend Jim Morin for lunch. Like Kapinos, Morin was a history major from West Point's class of 2001 and then served with the 82nd Airborne in Iraq and Afghanistan. He, too, left the Army for Georgetown's law school. Both men were frank, thoughtful, and occasionally sarcastic about their disillusionment with the Army; it was clear that they'd discussed the subject repeatedly before.

"You have a three-star general like John Vines come down to talk to us, and he says, 'Just go out there and shoot people,'" Kapinos said. "And you know that that is not how to fight an insurgency. Everyone who's ever read the most basic article on counterinsurgency knows that is not how you're going to win."

"Yeah," Morin agreed. "The general would come out and give these bellicose speeches, and every time he did that, I'd have to go back to my guys and say, 'What the general really meant to say was ...'"

Morin is a soldier-scholar type who frequently refers to military theorists in casual conversation. Like Kapinos, he always thought he would spend twenty-plus years in uniform. Morin became addicted to military history when he was twelve years old. When he was fifteen, he persuaded his parents to help him buy Civil War–era military dress and an antique musket worth several thousand dollars so he could participate in large-scale battle reenactments. At West Point, he took a

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special interest in counterinsurgency, writing his senior thesis on how the British successfully quelled the French-Canadian rebellion in Quebec. "If you go read Clausewitz and the other military writers," he explained, "[you learn that] war is politics by other means. You have to offer them an alternative better than the other guy. You have to fight a bullet war, but you also have to fight an economic development war, you have to fight a PR war, and you have to do it all at the same time. From what I saw, that just wasn't happening. I felt like we were keeping people safe so they could starve."

As a young lieutenant, Morin once drafted a memo for his commander proposing an elaborate program to help fund humanitarian and infrastructure projects, using integrated teams of infantrymen, civil affairs specialists, and civilian aid agencies. He didn't receive a response, and quickly stopped making such suggestions for fear of being perceived as "a wet-behind-the-ears second lieutenant." Now, he laughs about the incident as an example of his naïveté.

Of course, every generation of young officers is critical of their superiors. But the botched management in Iraq and a sense of squandered momentum in Afghanistan have intensified those feelings among today's young officers. It's one thing for young officers in the 1980s or '90s to stand around at a training facility at Fort Polk, Louisiana, complaining about the higher-ups; it's another when junior officers have to see soldiers under their command dying in missions they believe are strategically flawed or futile.

Like many young officers I met, Kapinos and Morin were particularly disturbed by the experience of a colonel named H. R. McMaster. McMaster earned a Sliver Star in Operation Desert Storm. In 2005, he commanded a brigade of several thousand men in the northern Iraqi city of Tal Afar. He was lauded as the first upper-level commander to introduce progressive counterinsurgency strategies, rather than the traditional security-based mission that most other commanders were pursuing. He sought support from the entire population of Tal Afar. When his men released detainees, they asked them how they felt they had been treated (this was dubbed the "Ask the Customer Program"). The results were impressive. As the rest of Iraq deteriorated in 2006, Tal Afar was relatively calm, and President Bush touted it as a success. Despite these achievements, McMaster has been passed over twice for promotion to brigadier general. Kapinos concluded, "The junior officers see a guy who they worship—he's smart and successful—and they see him get the short end of the stick. If he doesn't make one star, if he doesn't go on to great things, if the cream stops rising at some point—then the good guys are going to say, 'What's the point?'"

The consequences of shedding thousands of bright, battle-tested young officers are likely to be grim. In the short term, experts worry that military units in Iraq and Afghanistan—which have performed impressively despite staggeringly bad senior leadership—will degrade in effectiveness.

Many in the military are mindful of what happened when the Army experienced a similar flight of top young talent near the end of the Vietnam War. Then, critical midlevel leadership positions were filled by soldiers with less experience and maturity. Poorly prepared leaders drove relations between the officer corps and the enlisted men who served under them to historic lows. The Army documented incidents of "fragging," when outraged enlisted men turned their weapons on officers who they felt were gratuitously or ineptly leading troops into danger. "We got more of our own people killed than the enemy killed because of insufficiently skilled solders and lousy leadership," said General Donn Starry, a retired four-star general who was a commander in Vietnam. After the war, the military was undisciplined and struggled with crime and drugs. Top generals described it as a "hollow force."

There is also concern about the medium term beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. Over the next five to ten years, experts foresee a high likelihood that the military will be drawn into humanitarian and counterinsurgency-style operations that require officers with foreign-language aptitude, cultural awareness, negotiating skills, and other specialized talents. Many of these skills are rarely, if ever, taught in formal Army training programs. Soldiers who have seen firsthand what works and what doesn't intuitively understand the need to be courteous but always ready to pull the trigger. Yet shifting from an Army culture that once revered ornery, pugnacious characters like General George Patton won't be easy. "If we think that our future wars are going to look a lot more like this one, we are losing a huge knowledge base," said Rachel Kleinfeld, a director at the Truman National Security Project in Washington. "And once they're gone, they're gone."

If the brightest minds aren't in the pool of officers from which three- and four-star generals will someday be chosen, we could end up with a senior leadership of dimwits (think Tommy Franks).

But the greatest concern is how the exodus of the best and brightest will affect the Army's long-term capacity to win wars, counter threats, and keep the peace. Today's lieutenants and captains are the pool from which three- and four-star generals will be chosen twenty years from now. If the sharpest minds aren't in that pool, we could wind up—to put it bluntly—with a senior leadership of dimwits.

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Again, the Vietnam experience is instructive. After that war, the junior officers who did remain in the Army were promoted. During the 1970s and '80s, that generation of officers deliberately turned their backs on the study of counterinsurgency, believing they could simply avoid such conflicts in future. Many of the Iraq War's generals came from that generation (think Tommy Franks). Among the thousands of their peers who left the Army after the war ended, were there a small handful of exceptional leaders who might have helped the military better prepare for a post-9/11 world? "The senior leadership of the Army and Marine Corps were slow to understand the nature of the Iraq War," said Andrew Bacevich, a professor at Boston University and a retired Army colonel who served in Vietnam as a junior officer and who lost a son in Iraq. "Was there a brain drain in the 1970s in the Army? Yes, there absolutely was. Had that brain drain not have occurred, would the officer corps have been quicker and better at adjusting? It's impossible to say." However, numerous military experts I spoke with all agreed that the attrition of junior officers will harm the quality of the officer corps over the long term. Critics of the Army leadership often note that the highest positions in the military at large—the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the commander of CENTCOM, and the commander of Special Operations Forces—are all held by Navy officers, which seems odd at a time when ground forces are at the center of war operations.

The good news is that some leaders at the top understand the gravity of the situation. This October, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made reference to officer retention in a speech: "There is a generation of junior and midlevel officers and NCOs who have been tested in battle like none other in decades. They have seen the complex, grueling face of war in the twenty-first century up close," he said. "These men and women need to be retained, and the best and brightest advanced to the point that they can use their experience to shape the institution to which they have given so much." A month later, General Petraeus was summoned from Baghdad to Washington to preside over a board that will select the next class of brigadier generals. This was an unusual move that signaled, according to the *Washington Post*, "the Army's commitment to encouraging innovation and rewarding skills beyond the battlefield."

The bad news is that an all-volunteer military has few tools at its disposal to staunch the loss of high-grade junior officers—especially if the war in Iraq continues much longer. The Army has set an aggressive goal of retaining 95 percent of company-grade officers (typically those in their first ten years of service). That would be a higher retention rate than the Army has managed since the cold war ended, and experts describe this target as completely unrealistic. Otherwise, the Army's solution has been to throw money at the problem. Pay is higher, bonuses more common, and institutional incentives doled out generously as the Army seeks to grow its ranks while fighting a war on two fronts. (The average cost of training and paying a soldier has risen 60 percent since 2000, from $75,000 to $120,000 in 2006.) The Army also offers to pay graduate school tuition or give a young officer the base of his choice in exchange for the promise of a few more years in uniform. It's too early to tell whether this will have any impact on officer retention rates, and expectations are mixed.

There are other ways the Army might ease pressure on officers' families. It could lengthen the time between combat deployments. It could do more to harness fresh ideas among young officers—for example, by pulling them out of the combat rotation and assigning them to help develop new training programs. Or it could allow them to take outside internships with civilian agencies, in order to gain expertise in economic development or civil administration. It could even allow them to serve in the reserves for several years before resuming full-time active duty. Still, there's a slight hitch to all these plans—the war in Iraq. "These guys are getting tired from being ridden hard, and we want to give them a break. But it's hard to give them a break, because we need to put them in the fight," said Dr. Leonard Wong, a retired colonel and a research professor at the U.S. Army War College.

Army officials say anything less than two years at home for every one year at war is unsustainable for soldiers in the long run. Yet the current scheduling calls for fifteen months overseas followed by twelve months at home. For the past several years, officers who wanted a break from repeated deployments could seek the relative comfort of assignments at training posts or as staffers at the Pentagon. But with some soldiers now having endured three or four in tours in Iraq, such refuges are disappearing. In November, General George Casey identified 37,000 soldiers—7.2 percent of the force—who have not been to a war zone since 2001 and have no legitimate (that is, medical) reason not to go. He told them to pack their bags.

When seasoned junior officers read that President Bush is negotiating a long-term occupation of Iraq, and that the Democratic presidential candidates are acquiescing to the notion of 50,000 or 100,000 troops being stationed there for five to ten years, they can foresee the future. They know that their Army life won't be like that of their parents' generation, when a foreign posting meant Germany in the 1970s, touring the Black Forest in a BMW with the kids. Rather, it means daily danger and the complexities of diffusing a civil war. The family will be back home in a remote place like Fayetteville, North Carolina, wondering if Dad or Mom is going to return alive.

Civilian hawks in the government believe that the way to reduce the grueling pace of deployments while continuing to prosecute the war for "as long as it takes" is simply to increase the size of the force. Rudy Giuliani, for instance, has called for adding ten combat brigades. But who is going to lead these new forces if seasoned young officers continue leaving the Army in droves? Calls to expand the Army are empty rhetoric if the military brass and their civilian bosses

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fail to grapple with whether the services can recruit and retain junior leaders in both numbers and quality. The Army has struggled to meet the increase of 30,000 troops authorized since 2004. This year, new laws call for an additional increase of 65,000 during the next five years. But according to the Congressional Budget Office, if recruiting and retention does not improve from 2005 levels, the Army's end strength will actually decline.

Kapinos has been out of the Army for more than a year now. He lives with his wife in a small home in northern Arlington. He gets up early each morning and works out at a nearby gym, a lingering habit from his Army days. From the gym, he drives the same Honda Civic he bought while a cadet at West Point across the river to law school. He's friendly with his classmates, but many of them seem relatively immature to him.

On Fridays, when he doesn't have classes, Kapinos often plays golf in Virginia. He started taking lessons with his wife, who left her career as a schoolteacher after they moved to Virginia and now works for a private equity firm in Washington. They recently returned from a trip to Tuscany, where they celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary. Some weekends, they drive to Charlottesville for a football game at the University of Virginia, or they visit Kapinos's Army friends in North Carolina. Otherwise, they often stay in, taking turns cooking dinner and watching TV. "I like my life now. There's a certain predictability to it," Kapinos said. "It's totally different, because there is zero probability that I am going to get deployed next week to go fight away."

This summer, he plans to take the bar exam. He already has a job lined up in the Washington office of a prominent international law firm, where he'll start as an associate in the energy and utilities practice. Occasionally, he looks back at his Army life with regret. "Every so often I kind of put on the rose-colored glasses and say, 'Man, that was awesome. We were doing all this great stuff.' But, you know, you're only thinking of the excitement, which is only 5 percent of what we did in the Army."

Kapinos will probably make a great Washington lawyer. But rarely does anyone suggest that we'll need more gifted, dedicated, and seasoned Beltway attorneys in the twenty-first century. When the government struggles with its most elemental challenges—identifying geostrategic goals and designing the tactical missions to achieve them—it turns in part to its four-star generals. The generals who will appear before Congress in twenty-five years are in the Army right now. They're junior officers, probably captains. And keeping them in uniform might be the Army's most important mission. WM

Andrew Tilghman, a former Iraq correspondent for *Stars and Stripes*, is a staff writer for the *Marine Corps Times*. He lives in Washington, D.C., and can be reached at tilghman.andrew@gmail.com.

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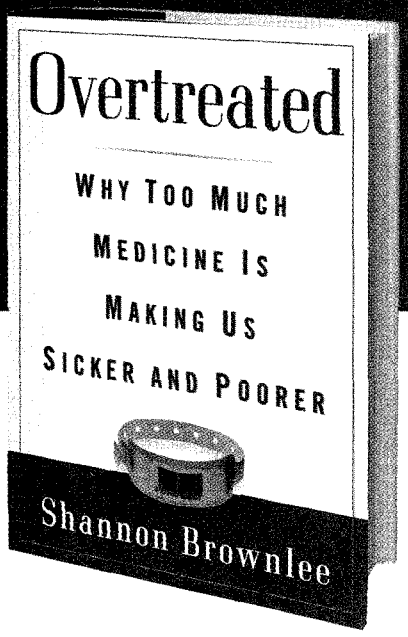
—JEROME GROOPMAN, M.D., Harvard Medical School and author of *How Doctors Think*



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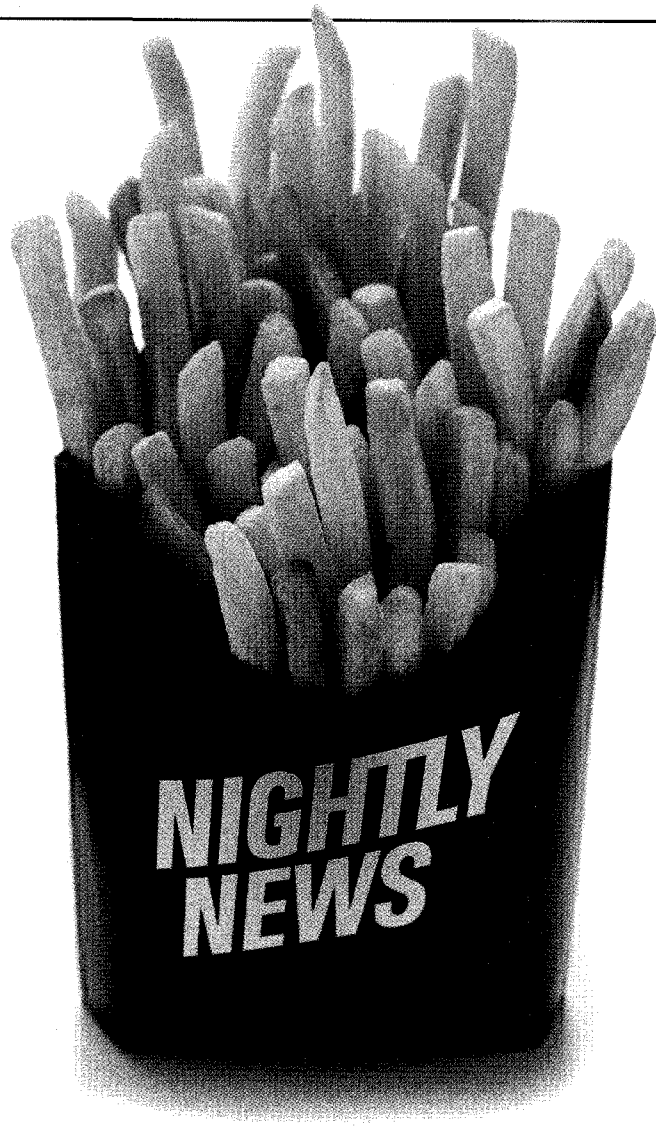

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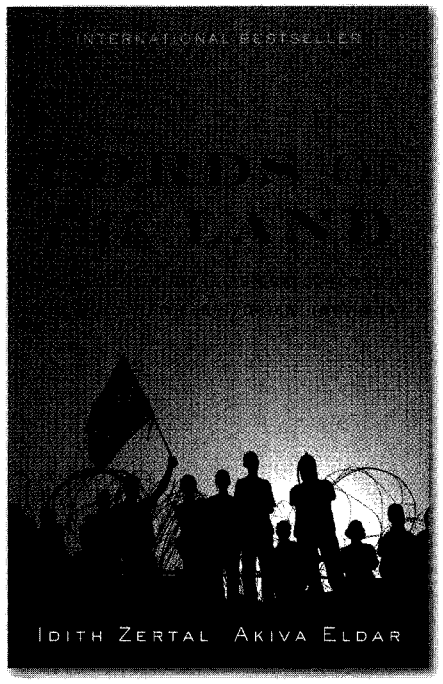
Unsettling

Dark truths about the Israeli occupation

By Daniel Levy



Lords of the Land: The War for Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967–2007

by Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar, translated by Vivian Eden
Nation Books, 576 pp.

Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar end their exhaustive study of Israeli settlement policy with a poignant question: Is it possible, they wonder, that Israel's 2005 withdrawal from the Gaza Strip will become a "first step in Israel's journey of liberating itself from the enslavement to the territories that it occupied in 1967, and which have occupied [it] since then and have brought it to the verge of destruction"? Negotiations that have been set in motion by the Annapolis peace conference in November will likely provide a partial answer. Zertal, a leading Israeli historian, and Eldar, a chief political columnist and a former Washington correspondent for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, have recently published *Lords of the Land: The War for Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967–2007*. It is a detailed history of Israel's nearly forty-year occupation of Gaza and the West Bank with a painful contention at its core. The occupation, say Zertal and Eldar, has wounded Israel's very psyche, damaging both its sense of self and its moral standing in the world. "The prolonged military occupation and the Jewish settlements that are perpetuating it have toppled Israeli governments," write the authors, "and have brought Israel's democracy and its political culture to the brink of an abyss."

The Hebrew version of this book was a best-seller in Israel, and sparked a debate there on the devastating realities and consequences of Israeli settlement policy. It would be useful to replicate that debate here in the United States—in the belly, as it were, of the enabler. The book's unflinchingly provocative title is matched by a narrative that pulls no punches, and the cast of villains (there are precious few heroes) runs the gamut from Jewish militia terrorists and their supporters in the Rabbinate to Labor Party apologists for the settlers and feckless judges who looked the other way as settlers created illegal outposts within Palestinian territory.

There are two sides to the settlement coin. The first is the settlers themselves, who are for the most part religiously inspired, unswervingly motivated, and highly effective. Religious Zionism was very much in the backseat of the Zionist enterprise until 1967, but once Israel assumed control of Judea and Samaria (as the settlers refer to the West Bank), the national religious camp saw its moment to seize the ideological steering wheel of state.

Their method was to create facts on the ground—that is, to quickly build settlements—and then get the political system on board by a number of means. The first step was persuasion ("We are all Jews surrounded by a sea of enemies"), followed by integration (the settlers' tentacles reached into all branches of government), and then coercion (the use of intimidation, threats, and violence). Any dubious action could be "koshered" by a shared appeal to Jewish history and Zionist destiny. If all else failed, there was the threat of Arab terror, which the settlers had a key role in encouraging. For believers, there was a religious justification and meaning—a theology of settlement, if you like. The final ingredient was an approach to the Palestinians that was at best colonial and at worst murderous. The new Lords of the West Bank arrogantly dismissed the region's indigenous population, and when the Palestinians showed opposition, settler militias and terrorist groups were formed (yes, Jewish terrorist groups). In 2001, an Israeli group named the Committee for the Defense of the Roads claimed responsibility for the drive-by killing of a six-month-old Palestinian baby and her family. Similar groups

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carried out additional attacks, and between 1980 and 1984, before the First Intifada began, twenty-three Palestinian civilians were killed in violent attacks by settlers, mostly involving firearms (often army issue). American readers might be shocked to discover that a religiously sanctified cult of martyrdom and "redemptive death" among elements of the Israeli settler community even exists at all, and then horrified at the extent of its destructiveness.

The other side of the settlement coin is the State of Israel, and the keyword here is complicity. Nothing would have been possible—or permanent—without the cooperation of Israel's army, legal system, and government bureaucracy, and the political leadership of all mainstream parties. The heroes who have fleetingly appeared—former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chiefs of Staff Haim Bar-Lev and Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Head of Intelligence Shlomo Gazit, human rights attorney Talia Sasson, and principled opposition politicians Yossi Sarid, Dedi Zucker, and Avrum Burg—have been no match for the huge cast of villains, facilitators, and mute bystanders. The banality and bureaucracy of the settlement enterprise carried—and continues to carry—the day.

If this entire story has a tragic hero, it is Yitzhak Rabin. He was the settlers' nemesis, popularizing opposition to them. But he usually lost to the settlers' establishment facilitators.

There are approximately 460,000 settlers (including those in East Jerusalem) in the settlements; they nearly doubled their numbers during the fifteen-year-long failed peace process. Given all this, the question for American peace conference planners is whether the settlement project can in fact be rolled back. Despite repeated requests and occasional assurances, the expansion of the settlement and control system in the occupied territories has never been stopped. The settlement advocates have always had other rabbits to pull from the hat: distinguish a broadly defined "natural growth" from overt expansion; call a new settlement an "outpost"; build a security barrier deep inside Palestinian territory.

During U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's October visit to the region to plan the peace summit, Rice suddenly faced media headlines (and considerable embarrassment) about new Israeli land confiscations east of Jerusalem. Former Secretaries of State Kissinger, Baker, and Albright (among others) would all have sympathized.

As for the Palestinian leadership, they have never—whether from weakness or naïvete—demanded a settlement freeze as a precondition for negotiations, and neither has the United States.

Of the three towering figures on the Israeli political stage for most of the post-1967 era—Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin, Ariel Sharon, and Shimon Peres—only one emerges with any credibility, or even decency. If this entire story has a tragic hero, it is Rabin. He was the settlers' nemesis, popularizing opposition to them in his 1992 election campaign, promising to divert funds from settlements to education, and describing their movement, Gush Emunim ("Block of the Faithful"), as "a cancer in the body of Israeli democracy." Rabin fought (and usually lost to) the settlers' establishment facilitators at every turn. Ironically, *Lords of the Land* comes out almost exactly a dozen years after Rabin's murder, just as right-wing religious settler groups are mounting their first concerted campaign for the pardoning of Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir.

Predictably, opposite Rabin stood Ariel Sharon. Sharon was the father of the settlement project in the army and the Knesset, but most of all in the various ministries he controlled at different times. As great facilitator, Sharon allocated land and water rights to settlements. As agriculture minister in the Menachem Begin government from 1977 to 1981 during sensitive negotiations with Egypt, he authorized new settlements. As infrastructure minister under Likud Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Sharon defended the Israeli system of control at a time when new settlements had become a huge diplomatic headache. And even as Netanyahu was holding talks with Yasser Arafat at the Wye plantation near Washington, D.C., Sharon commanded his West Bank followers to "seize every hilltop" in the Palestinian territories.

As prime minister in 2004–05, when Sharon finally championed the disengagement from Gaza, Sharon's erstwhile supporters turned on him and vilified him as a *Judenrat* leader and a Nazi. But in the historical balance sheet, as Zertal and Eldar make clear, the 7,000 settlers he evacuated from Gaza barely register when they're set alongside his "accomplishments" in the West Bank.

Perhaps most unexpectedly to an international audience, Shimon Peres also stood opposite Rabin. If anyone is still taken in by the heavily self-concocted image of Peres as visionary peacemaker, this book will serve as a myth-shattering antidote. Peres, who became Israel's new president on July 15, 2007, undermined Rabin's efforts to reign in settlements. The settlers flattered Peres with appeals to the timeless Zionist pioneering spirit—and, it seems, he could never resist flattery. (He famously celebrated a tree-planting ceremony with the settlers of Ofra in 1976, one year after they illegally established the first settlement in the heart of a Palestinian population center.)

Zertal and Eldar's otherwise marvelous book is sometimes difficult to follow and has a tendency to be somewhat disjointed thematically and chronologically. It also examines the territories from an almost exclusively Israeli perspective: the Palestinian and American angles are largely beyond its scope. The international, and especially American, reader would have benefited if this book had been edited for a special American version rather than published as a straight translation from the Hebrew.

Several themes of interest are teasingly touched on but not elaborated. We are reminded, for instance, that Baruch Goldstein, the man who indiscriminately opened fire on Palestinian worshippers in

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Hebron (killing twenty-nine and wounding more than a hundred) and around whom a cult of hero worship has developed, was from Brooklyn, New York. But there is no discussion here of the overrepresentation of American Jews among the ideological settler hard core. The financial and political support from certain U.S. groups (both Jewish and evangelical) that is enjoyed by the settlers makes a frustratingly truncated appearance. The book's most glaring problem is the lack of a systematic discussion of U.S. policy toward the settlements over the last forty years. (In the run-up to Annapolis, for instance, a repetitive historical pattern of Israeli behavior was on show again—a pattern that flits between humiliating provocation and polite avoidance but never amounts to the cessation of an activity that contravenes U.S. policy.)

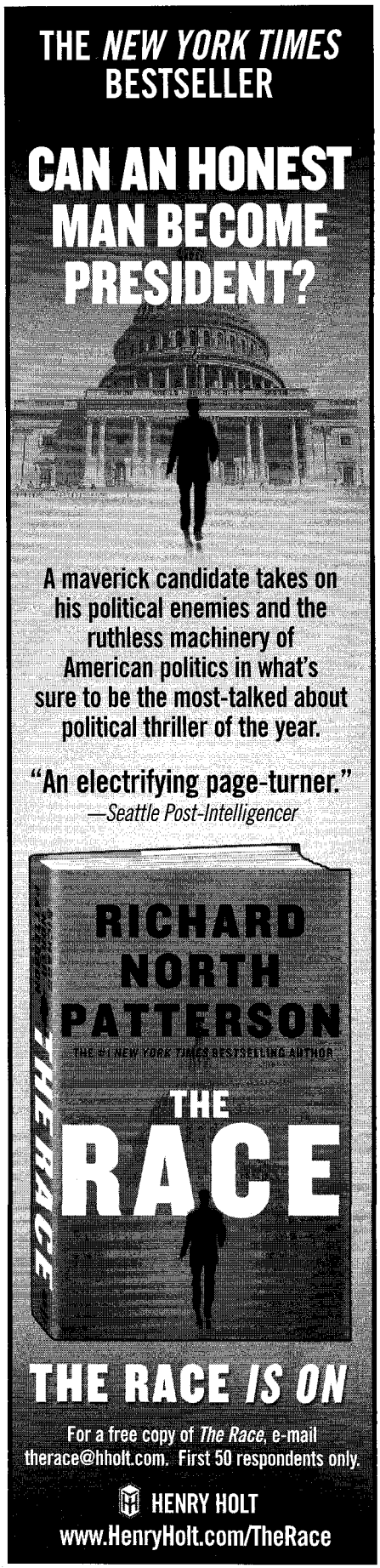
What we do get from Eldar and Zertal is a highly informative, accurate, and well-sourced account of Israel's own March of Folly. We learn that there are already "two separate states for two hostile peoples" and that they exist in the West Bank itself, "[where] the Palestinians and the settlers have separate systems of roads, services, and laws." The whole story is there, from the first act of settlement just three months after the conclusion of the 1967 war to the most recent construction of outposts, bypass roads, and separation barrier.

The record of the second Bush administration on the subject is incredibly inauspicious, with regard not only to settlement policy but also the entire Mideast peace process. During George W. Bush's tenure, the White House has made several public plays on the issue, has been snubbed each time—and then has retreated. First, the 2001 Mitchell Report called on Israel to "freeze all settlement activity." President Bush's much-referenced June 2002 speech repeated the call. ("Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories must stop," he declared.) The "Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," launched in 2003, defined a settlement freeze as including natural growth and the dismantling of outposts. Then, when Bush and Sharon exchanged letters in 2004, the American commitment was watered down to "restricting settlement growth" to within "defined construction lines" and "removal of unauthorized outposts." Coming out of Annapolis, the Bush administration has shown no signs of getting any tougher on the settlement issue.

There is one final point, and it should give Zertal and Eldar's book an appeal beyond the club of Israel-Palestine specialists: *Lords of the Land* can be read as a "How-Not-To" guide on counterterrorism. The story of Israel and the territories shreds the playbook on the global war on terror, presenting a world in which real grievances and injustices crucially matter. Far from any glib division of the world into good and evil, terrorism has roots, reasons, and a past—indeed, there is a direct link between settlements, military occupation, and terrorism. Zertal and Eldar explain in great detail why the Al-Aqsa Intifada (the Second Intifada), launched in 2000, might also be called the Settlements War. Massive, disproportionate firepower and military hubris (using the Israel Defense Forces as a club against the enemy, apparently against the wishes of ministerial-level leaders, including the defense minister's appointed ceasefire negotiator) led to an escalation of violence and the Palestinians' use of suicide bombings. Similarly, in 1994, Hamas violated their own prohibition against using suicide bombings that indiscriminately target civilians only after the Goldstein outrage against Muslim worshippers in Hebron. In 1996, Hamas ended an ongoing informal truce only following the Israeli liquidation of a leading militant, Yihye Ayash—a sequence that was to tragically repeat itself during the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

By the beginning of the new millennium, many Israelis began to understand the absurdity of viewing the occupation as simply a war on Palestinian terror. They understood the urgent need to address legitimate Palestinian grievances. Then along came an angry post-9/11 America, with a stunningly simplistic and misguided framing of the war on terror. This framing is a mistake in whose shadow we all continue to live. WM

Daniel Levy, a senior fellow at the New America and Century Foundations, was previously an advisor in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office and was the lead Israeli drafter of the Geneva Initiative.



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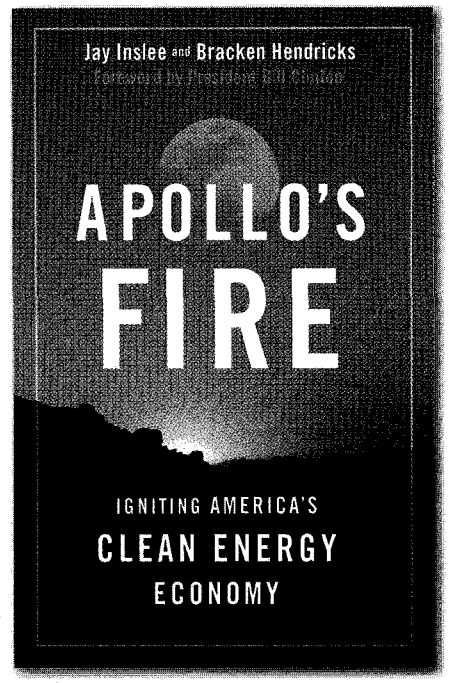
Solving global warming is possible—and profitable

By Sir Richard Branson



Apollo's Fire: Igniting America's Clean Energy Economy

by Jay Inslee and Bracken Hendricks
Island Press, 387 pp.

The debate over global warming has changed. Not so long ago, the point of contention was the science. Some feared that adding billions of tons of pollution to the atmosphere was to flirt with environmental disaster, while others advised that it was no problem at all, and maybe even good for the earth. In the face of mounting scientific evidence, however, that latter group has dwindled to a tiny (if still vocal) fringe.

Now that we have largely accepted that the problem of global warming exists, our governments argue about what, if anything, can be done about it. Here we have a classic fight among the dour pessimists and the exuberant optimists.

The pessimists contend that building an energy economy that can tame global warming is impossible for all sorts of reasons: cost, technology, big government, and jobs. For them, a world without polluting fossil fuels would be a cold and dark place. No doubt they are right that global warming is difficult to solve, but they are surely wrong to adopt a do-nothing approach.

The optimists, on the other hand, believe the problem is indeed solvable. If you want to hear from the optimists, pick up a copy of *Apollo's Fire: Igniting America's Clean Energy Economy*, written by Jay Inslee, a committed congressman from Washington State, and Bracken Hendricks, an experienced advocate for energy reform. With enough sunshine to fire a field of solar panels, these two show us why we should not listen to the naysayers.

Count me among the optimists.

My passion in life comes from setting huge, apparently unachievable challenges and then doing whatever it takes to surmount them. When my company, Virgin, was told that it could not create a profitable transatlantic airline from scratch, I was motivated to get our service up and running in just six months—and we haven't looked back since.

This is how the authors of *Apollo's Fire* see the issue of global warming—that it is challenging us to create a better future. And they named their book after the ultimate Mission Impossible: President Kennedy's challenge, in 1961, to put a man on the moon in just nine years, and before the Russians.

The book is smart, but it is no dull policy treatise. It is for the business leader, the investor, and the citizen. It is the eye-opening story of how we can revolutionize the ways we produce and consume energy to transform the global economy with new technologies and millions of "green collar" jobs—all while beating global warming. Along the way, Inslee gives us an entertaining look inside his work in Congress, including meeting with President Bush—whom he calls the "Decider"—to talk climate change.

Painting the big picture, Inslee and Hendricks argue that we can build a world of diverse energy sources, where the entrepreneur creates the technology to wring affordable and reliable energy from sunlight, electric vehicles, wind, or ocean waves. Farmers can benefit from new energy markets for their crops. Workers in Boston, Detroit, Houston, or Seattle can build wind turbines or solar power systems.

The authors also drill down with stories of scientists and businessmen building the nation's first wave buoy electrical generating system and others building a plug-in electric car that gets 150 miles a gallon. They offer the reader a chance to stand at the very edge of innovation.

Global warming is a challenge we all share, and we must all make a commitment to its solution. Over the next ten years, my company will invest at least $3 billion

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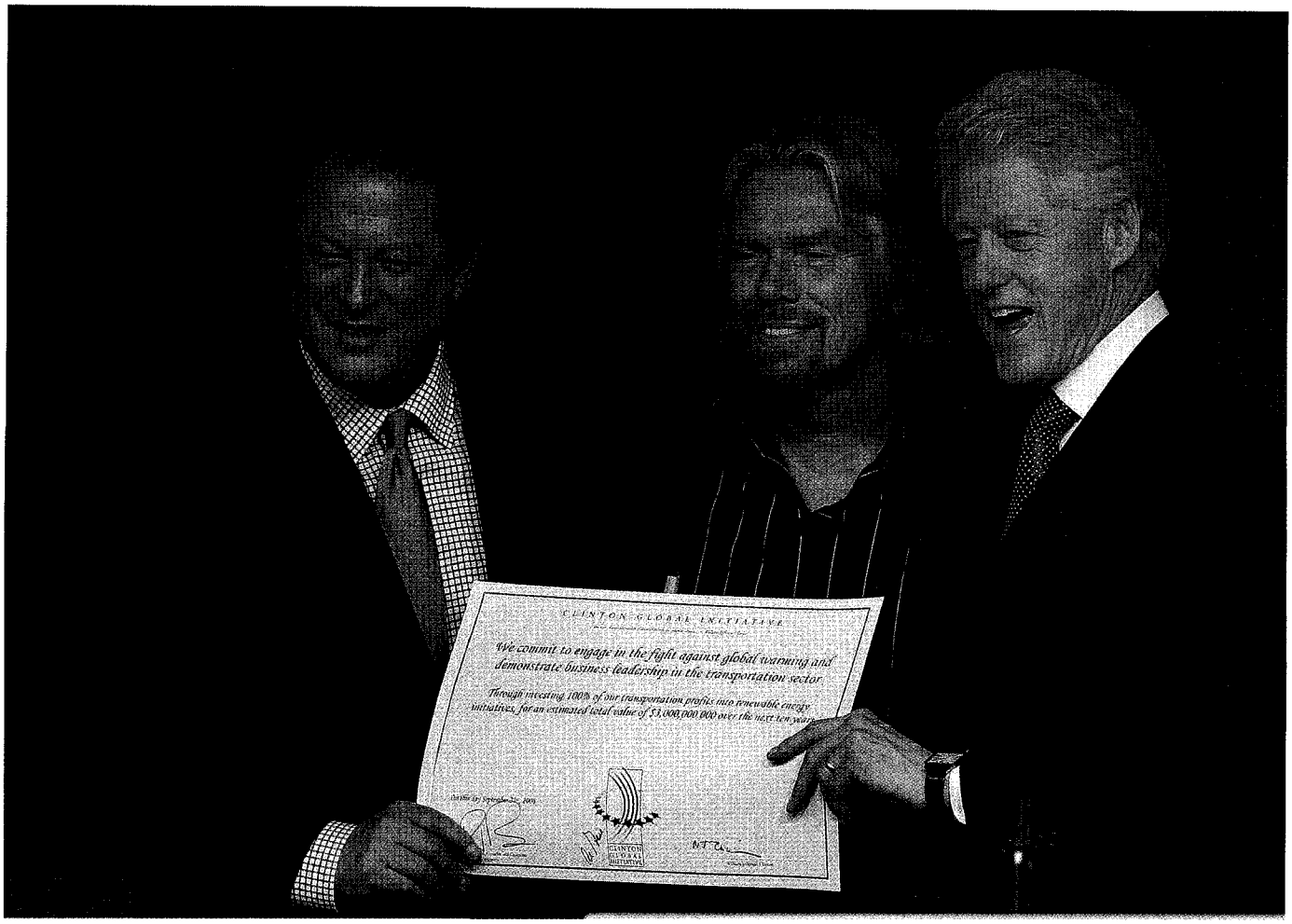

Power players: Sir Richard and friends

in developing energy sources that do not contribute to global warming. We have started Virgin Fuels, to develop clean-burning biofuels. We will even power a jumbo jet on biofuel next year—something others in the industry predicted was a decade away.

The only way we will beat global warming is to invest in viable new fuels and technologies that sustain and bolster the economy.

I am often asked if I do these things to make money. Of course. The only way we will beat global warming is to invest in viable new fuels and technologies that sustain and bolster the economy and can actually replace fossil fuels.

Inslee and Hendricks understand that. They know that global warming will be solved through the risk and reward of capitalism. Yes, some people are going to get very, very rich along the way, but the authors show how poor inner cities and rural small towns can use these new investments to create a broadly shared prosperity.

My hope is that our governments will remember this as they fashion a regime to solve this problem. Money is a great motivator; let it help solve global warming.

For America and the world, this "radical" vision is a win-win situation. We can spend our money manufacturing energy technology and creating millions of jobs instead of throwing it, almost literally, down a hole in the ground. And a solution to global warming could also reduce the many security problems across the world, and perhaps even help us avoid another war in the Middle East.

In the end, the ethics of the situation should motivate us just as much as the potential for money, jobs, and security. Our generation has inherited an incredibly beautiful world from our parents, as they did from their parents. It is incumbent upon us to find a way to live in it without putting future generations at risk.

President Kennedy's vision to send a man to the moon spawned the inspiration and innovation to achieve the so-called impossible. It is my hope that this new *Apollo's Fire* might capture the public's imagination and ignite the next revolution in clean energy—just in time to save the future. WM

Sir Richard Branson is chairman of the Virgin Group.

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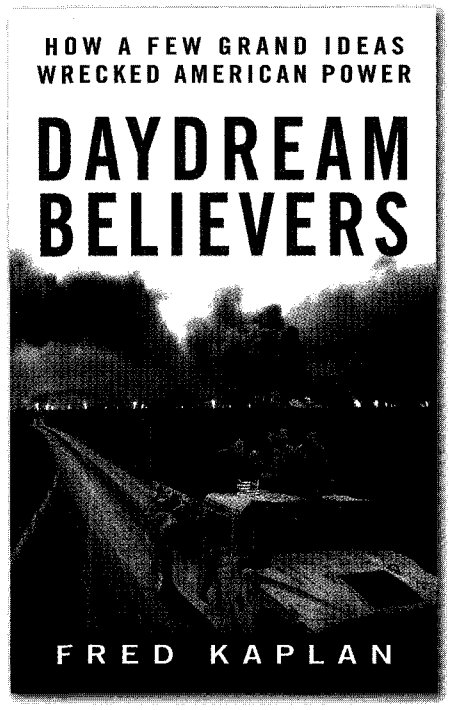
America the Invincible

The roots of Bush's disastrous foreign policy

By Kevin Drum



Daydream Believers: How a Few Grand Ideas Wrecked American Power

by Fred Kaplan
Wiley, 230 pp.

The CBS reality series *Survivor* is now in its fifteenth season, and I've watched them all. George Bush, I'd guess, has watched none of them. At first glance this may seem like a rare instance of good cultural taste on his part, but it's actually a shame. *Survivor*, you see, offers one big lesson for national leaders who fancy themselves world-historical geopolitical titans: Alliances matter. The show has included contestants ranging from pencil-necked Ivy League students to testosterone-laden Navy fighter jocks, but not once has any of them won by going it alone. Without a sturdy alliance, it's only a matter of time before you're voted off the island.

It's probably too late to sneak a box set of *Survivor: Palau* into President Bush's hands, but a decent substitute might be Fred Kaplan's *Daydream Believers: How a Few Grand Ideas Wrecked American Power*, a slim new volume with an elegant and finely honed argument to make. Kaplan, a Pulitzer Prize–winning reporter and author of the War Stories column for the online magazine *Slate*, says that George Bush's foreign policy miscues, ranging from Russia to North Korea to Iraq and beyond, can all be attributed to one thing: his inability to understand that even after the cold war, even after 9/11, alliances still matter. In fact, they matter more than they used to.

The background for all this is well-trod territory: When the Berlin Wall fell and Boris Yeltsin was elected president of a democratic but economically hobbled Russia, suddenly no other country in the world was even remotely militarily competitive with the United States. For a while this was heady stuff—we were the "indispensable nation," a hyperpower to replace the dreary old superpower we'd once been—but for as long as Bill Clinton was president this had only a modest effect on America's actual foreign policy.

Clinton, a natural alliance builder both by instinct and background, understood a simple truth: during the cold war, alliances had come almost naturally. Since fear is what drives most alliances, and the Soviet Union provided plenty to be afraid of, the United States had no trouble finding and grooming allies. But when the Soviet Union fell, that fear melted away and our erstwhile allies were, as Kaplan puts it, "free to go their own way, pursue their own interests, form their own alliances of convenience, without much regard to Washington's thoughts about the matter." Retaining alliances in a unipolar world was harder, not easier, so Clinton worked hard at it. We signed on to NAFTA and the WTO; cut a deal with North Korea to halt their nuclear bomb program; expanded NATO; and put together a multinational force that ended the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and forced the defeat of Slobodan Milosevic without the loss of a single American life.

But then two things changed, and this is where *Daydream Believers* picks up the story. The first was a technological revolution. The second was George Bush.

The technology revolution came in several phases, all of which started to coalesce at the same time the Soviet Union fell. The best known of them is missile defense, a topic of almost totemic power to conservatives ever since Ronald Reagan took up its banner in 1983. But as Kaplan reminds us, missile defense isn't merely a technology that's failed to deliver on its promises for the past two decades, it's a technology that's failed to deliver on its promises for the past *five* decades. From Nike-Zeus to Nike-X to Safeguard to SDI to the current ensemble of systems referred to generically as

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National Missile Defense, the United States has been pursuing the dream of an invulnerable missile shield since shortly after World War II. Once every five or ten years, like clockwork, an official report has concluded that missile defense technology doesn't work—but that hasn't stopped the dream. In the case of the Bush administration, it merely caused them to redouble their efforts.

The second leg of the technology revolution chronicled in *Daydream Believers* is the perfection of smart bombs. First used at the tail end of the Vietnam War and then to greater effect in the Gulf War, during the 1990s they finally became both accurate enough and cheap enough to seriously transform aerial warfare. JDAM-equipped bombs were instrumental in both the success of the Kosovo war and the (near) destruction of the Taliban in record time during the Afghanistan war, and for a while it seemed as if conventional infantry warfare really was becoming obsolete.

The third and final piece of the puzzle is a basket of technologies developed over the past couple of decades under the rubric of "military transformation." Driven by advances in microprocessor technology and software development, it includes not just smart bombs but radar-guided missiles, high-resolution surveillance gear, and high-speed communications networks to link them all together. Collectively they provided the foundation for the "smaller, lighter, faster" military that then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld insisted on deploying in Afghanistan and Iraq—a military that, it turned out, could accomplish half its mission with stunning success but the other half not at all.

What binds these three technologies together is not their actual deployment. After all, the first has been a habitual failure, the second has worked well, and the third is somewhere in between. But the *reality* of missile defense or smart bombs isn't what's important to Kaplan's story. What's important is the illusion of invulnerability they provided, an illusion that George Bush and his enablers used to convince themselves of something they wanted to believe anyway: that alliances no longer mattered. The United States could go it alone.

Technologies like smart bombs and missile defense provided an illusion of invulnerability, an illusion that George Bush and his enablers used to convince themselves of something they wanted to believe anyway: that alliances no longer mattered. The United States could go it alone.

This idea didn't start with Bush, of course. Kaplan traces its origins to Andy Marshall, the gnomic, near-mythic analyst who's run the Defense Department's Office of Net Assessment through seven administrations. Marshall's view wasn't merely that we should have better weapons than anyone else, but that "the Pentagon should focus on weapons and strategies that would give the United States such overwhelming superiority that other countries wouldn't even bother trying to compete." The goal wasn't American power, it was *uncontested* American power.

This was a worldview that appealed to Bush, Rumsfeld, and Vice President Dick Cheney. In other hands, the technology revolutions of missile defense and smart bombs would have been useful tools. In the hands of Bush and his neocon cheerleaders, they became the key to a transformation in the way America dealt with the world.

The results are all around us. Russia? It would be a paper tiger once we abrogated the ABM treaty and got missile defense up and running. North Korea? Ditto, which in turn meant there was no need to compromise or negotiate with them over their nuclear weapons programs. Iraq? Alliances would just slow down our transformed military machine. Iran and Syria? Pinpoint air strikes would be enough to keep them in line.

All of these miscues were a direct result of Bush's belief in an American military machine that was not merely strong, but literally invincible. Iraq, needless to say, is by far the most visible of these failures, and while there are other books that provide considerably more detail on just how the Iraq catastrophe unfolded (Thomas Ricks's *Fiasco*, George Packer's *The Assassins' Gate*, and Michael Gordon's *Cobra II* chief among them), Kaplan does a good job of providing a capsule summary of how the Bush administration's arrogance led to cataclysm and meltdown.

What's most striking in his account is how deeply this attitude infected everything. The stories of Rumsfeld badgering his commanders to slim down their battle plans are well known, as is his blanket disdain for any postwar activity that didn't depend on his smaller and lighter military. But it's also visible—if one step removed—in other famously ill-conceived decisions, most notably in the far-reaching effects of the first two orders issued by Jerry Bremer after he became viceroy of Iraq: one that ordered a comprehensive de-Baathification of the Iraqi government and another that disbanded the Iraqi military. These orders have been dissected in detail by dozens of authors, but in a small but telling passage in *Daydream Believers* Kaplan reports for the first time exactly how they came about.

It turns out that shortly before the war started, two principals' meetings were held. These meetings, which included the president, vice president, CIA director, secretaries of state and defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, produced two decisions. The first was to set up a commission to root out undesirable Baathists but *not* to carry out a comprehensive de-Baathification program. The second was to keep Iraq's regular army units (though not the Republican Guard) intact. Both decisions were unanimous.

So what happened? The orders were unilaterally countermanded by the Pentagon. Colin Powell was taken by surprise, the Joint Chiefs were taken by surprise, and, judging by his later comments, even George Bush was unsure just how it hap-

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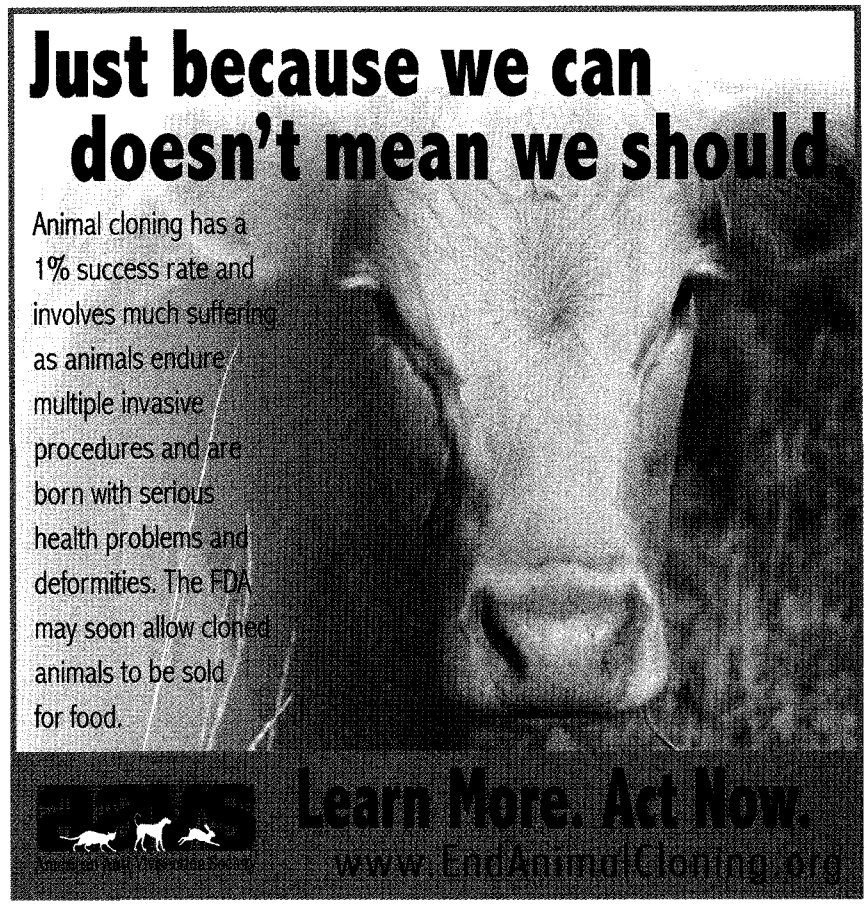
pened. And although the responsibility for the new orders is still shrouded in mystery, it was most likely the work of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, the two men most obsessed with the nearly limitless power of military transformation. Why bother with half measures, after all, if you're in charge of a military machine that's invincible?

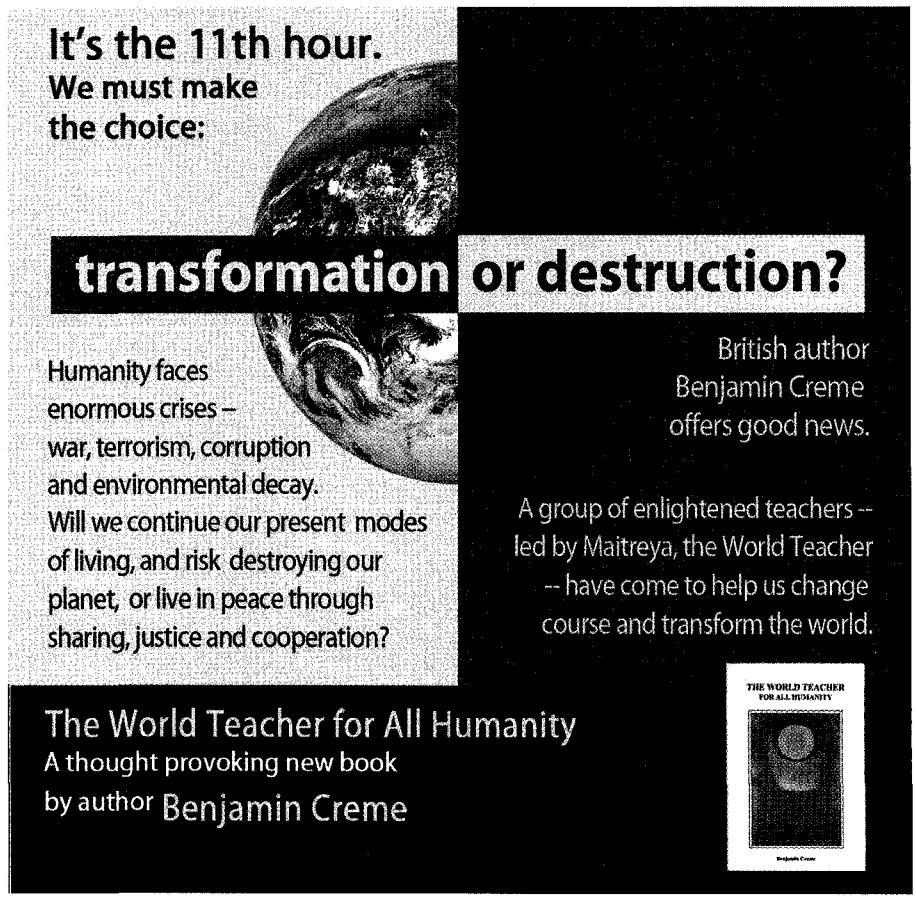
This attitude, so disastrous in Iraq, was a model for the entire world. "Bush and his top advisors," Kaplan concludes, "began their administration believing that America was so peerlessly strong it could impose its will unilaterally." But they forgot that wars are fought to achieve political goals, and until those goals are met the war isn't over. High-tech wonder weapons may give us a huge edge on the battlefield, "but they don't win wars [and] they can't achieve the political objectives that inspired the war in the first place."

Any successful foreign policy has two components. First, it has to encompass a clear-eyed understanding of the world and its actors as they really are, not merely as we wish them to be. Second, it demands an equally clear-eyed vision of how we wish the world to be, not merely how it actually is. George Bush failed on both counts. Blinded by technological prowess, he failed to understand the pragmatic necessity of alliances even for an indispensable nation. And, blinded by visions of democracy and freedom, he failed to understand the practical requirements for promoting either.

Successful foreign policies are always of their time and place. Neither the Congress of Vienna nor the policy of containment are models worth emulating in a world of jihad and weapons of mass destruction. But certain principles of statecraft are timeless, among them the primacy of both alliances and the vision and skill to exploit them in the service of enlightened national interest. Both have been missing in action for the past seven years, and on this score *Daydream Believers* is both a field guide and a warning. WM

Kevin Drum is editor of the weblog Political Animal and contributing writer for the *Washington Monthly.*





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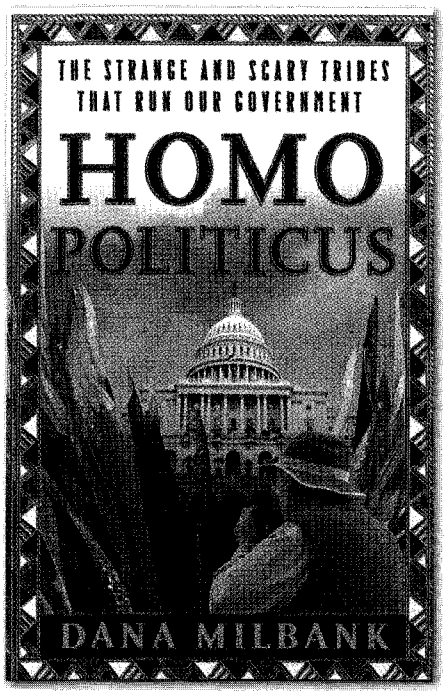
Anthropolitics



Homo Politicus: The Strange and Scary Tribes That Run Our Government

by Dana Milbank
Doubleday, 276 pp.

Dana Milbank explains why Scott McClellan resembles the sin-eating goddess of the Aztecs

By Jamie Malanowski

This summer I was a guest on a radio show in Washington where I had been invited to talk about my new novel, a political satire. The host asked me to read a passage where the members of Congress were described as "535 egoists superglued to corporate interests who get to kick around the great questions of war and peace," to take just part of the lavishly insulting passage. The host chuckled appreciatively, and then took a call from a listener, who brought the whole mood down.

"I worked on Capitol Hill for twenty years," he said, in a tone of perplexed dismay, "and I continue to be amazed at how wrong the media is about Congress. In all the years I worked there, in all the confidential meetings, all I saw was that most of them are decent people who try to do the right things."

Confronted with this display of wounded sincerity, I am embarrassed to say that I folded like an origami bluebird, and in a humble, consoling voice I assured the listener that I meant no harm to all the decent Mister and Ms. Smiths who come to Washington to build a better world.

Oh, what a choker! How I wish I had had a copy of Dana Milbank's *Homo Politicus: The Strange and Scary Tribes That Run Our Government* to help see me through my sudden infection of good manners. Other books may rail against Washington's shortcomings with greater passion and fury, but none leaves the reader wondering quite so unhappily—or with such perplexed dismay, for that matter—why we put up with so much crap.

Milbank's gimmick in this book is to affect the pose of an anthropologist who has set out to describe life along the Potomac—the tribes, the rituals, the festivals and taboos. This trick works extremely well. Context is everything, and like a rain shower that sits on the edge of a fast-moving front, Milbank's recontexturizing brings a crisp clarity to Washington's ways of doing business. Lobbyists, for example, are regarded as often reviled, occasionally welcome, and frequently useful facts of life in D.C., but when Milbank likens them to the Big Men in the tribes of Melanesia—ambitious figures who possess "no actual authority" but "who gain followers and power by showering gifts" (or campaign contributions, as they're known in Potomac Land)—their stature is punctuated. But as fun as it is to think of Tommy Boggs with a bone in his nose, it is equally dismaying to realize that in all our supposed sophistication, we are as susceptible to manipulation and chicanery as those we disdain as primitive.

Remarkably, Milbank makes the trick work again and again. A discussion of the *kakaram*, a headhunter hired by the Jivaro Indians of Ecuador to exact vengeance upon one's enemies, leads to an appreciation of Washington's "most prominent *kakaram* in recent years," the former House majority leader and pest exterminator Tom DeLay. After examining the elaborate staged performances in Kabuki theater in Japan we move to the elaborate staged confirmation hearings of Supreme Court justices. A mention of Tlazolteotl, the sin-eating goddess of the Aztecs, takes us to Scott McClellan and the other political spokesmen who have to answer for a boss's transgressions. From purification rites we move to Grover Norquist and his inviolable no-tax hike pledges, from shape shifting to John McCain and his makeover, from the Oracle of Delphi to the pronouncements of Charlie Cook, from black magic to the dark arts of Karl Rove, from sacrificial lambs to Scooter Libby. And so on.

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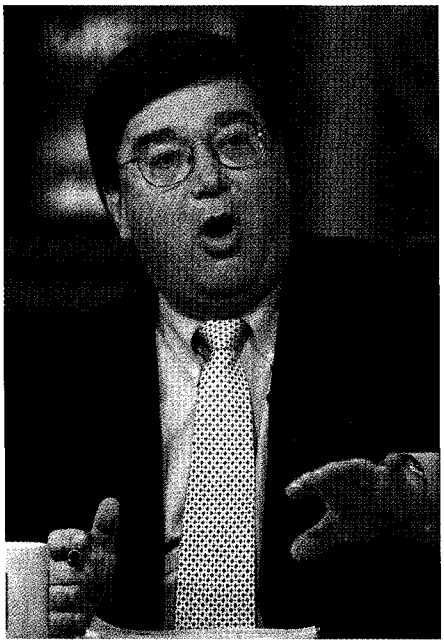

Separated at birth: Charlie Cook and the Oracle of Delphi

Getty Images for Meet the Press, Getty Images

A fair amount of nimble-footedness is required to keep a show like this rolling. It's amusing to read Milbank's bit about Figureheads, and how Washington prefers to give a title to unthreatening figures like Bush and Hastert but to give real power to darker figures like Cheney, Rove, and DeLay. A funny idea, but not exactly one that would hold water if you bothered to look way back to, oh, the previous administration. Still, Milbank, one of the stars of the *Washington Post*, keeps things moving. One of his best achievements is that he never lingers on a single individual; even such targets as Bob Woodward or Dick Cheney, whose long records of performance would seem to leave them ripe exemplars for any number of Potomac phenomena, get but a single slide in the PowerPoint presentation. It's a shrewd move; no need to pile on when a swift forearm shiver will take care of things.

Playing the anthropologist is Milbank's obvious stunt. His other trick is far subtler and infinitely dirtier: he listens when people talk. And so he remorselessly records Pat Robertson relaying in 2004 that God told him that Bush would be reelected "in a blowout" and in 2005 that God told him that Bush would get Social Security and tax reform passed; almost sadistically captures Joe Biden's hurricane-force windbaggery at the John Roberts hearings; joyfully captures Jack Abramoff swearing that his new kosher deli was going to serve pork products that had received the religious okay; and mercilessly records the "folkloric narrative" (that is to say, "stories") about 9/11, Iraq, and weapons of mass destruction that Dick Cheney created over a series of appearances on *Meet the Press*. Milbank has a wry and twinkly sense of humor, but he is never funnier than when he gets out of the way and reminds people of the time Katherine Harris announced at a rally for President Bush that a Middle Eastern man who was packing hundreds of pounds of explosives had been arrested in Indiana with the intention of blowing up a power grid; or when Doctor/Senator/Majority Leader Bill Frist told George Stephanopoulos that he didn't know whether HIV could be spread through tears and sweat; or when Congressman Roy Blunt, who was dating a lobbyist for Philip Morris, explained that he slipped two pro-smoking provisions into the bill creating the Department of Homeland Security because "it was good policy"; or when Tom DeLay wrote to his supporters and encouraged them to cast their votes for country singer Sara Evans in her bid to win *Dancing With the Stars*. (DeLay's interest wasn't completely unpolitical; one of her rivals was Jerry Springer, "the ultraliberal talk show host.")

Milbank is very good, but he's hardly perfect. It's kind of funny when on page 265 he quotes Virginia Governor Gerald Baliles saying that "the shortest distance between two points is [Professor] Larry Sabato and a TV camera." Of course, it was somewhat funnier on page 199 when he quoted this warning about Joe Wilson from the *New Republic*: "If you encounter him, at all costs, do not let yourself get between him and a camera, a lectern or a buffet, or you will likely be trampled." Of course, it was funniest on page 50, when Milbank cited Bob Dole observing that the most dangerous place in Washington is between Chuck Schumer and a television camera. (For the record—Dole: brief and witty; *TNR*: wordy, too much in love with its amusing self; Baliles: doesn't actually make any sense unless you first heard Dole tell the joke.)

In taking Potomac Man out of his context, Milbank can't help but make us wonder why we accept business as usual, why we tolerate the all-too-obvious deceit and hypocrisy that color our national life. In one of his best passages, Milbank wonders why "a person who has attained high office risks his entire reputation by engaging in sex with an intern or a page ... [or selling] out his constituents merely to gain a few thousand dollars in campaign contributions." His answer is that Potomac Man "is so convinced of his own exceptionalism that he believes himself invincible, invulnerable to accusations of vice, and incapable of failure"—and quite sure, as my radio caller was, of his own inherent decency and noble intentions. Yet it's a government in which both parties are almost wholly underwritten by special interests, in which one branch has deceived us into an imperial war and the other cannot find the courage to end it, in which the president enjoys the approval of about a third of his countrymen and the Congress far less (and the news media—forget about it!), and for which only about half of those eligible to vote bother to do so. Exceptional indeed.

Dana Milbank has written a sly, smart, enjoyable book. Hopefully, ridicule can still help. WM

Jamie Malanowski is the managing editor of Playboy. His new novel, *The Coup*, was published by Doubleday in July.

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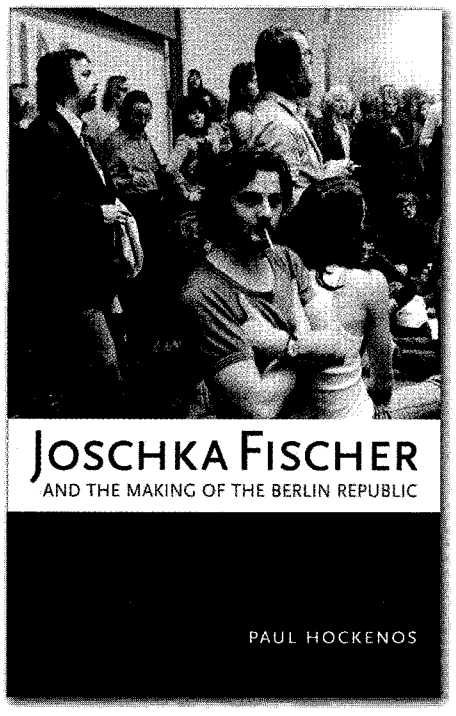
The Rebel Realist



Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic: An Alternative History of Postwar Germany

by Paul Hockenos
Oxford University Press, 384 pp.

How Joschka Fischer reinvented Germany

By Joshua Hammer

In January 2001, toward the end of my stint in Germany as *Newsweek*'s Berlin bureau chief, a decades-old series of photographs surfaced in the German magazine *Stern* and instantly became the talk of the country. The pictures showed the country's charismatic, popular foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, clad in a motorcycle helmet and leather jacket—punching and kicking a prostrate German policeman in the middle of a 1973 street protest. Fischer's evolution from streetfighting radical to pillar of the establishment had always been a subject of controversy at home and of bewilderment abroad (imagine, say, David Dellinger or any other member of the Chicago Seven becoming secretary of state). But these photos seemed beyond the pale, spurring angry demands for his resignation from the right-wing opposition. "Someone who acts in this manner is no representative of a nonviolent civic society," said Wolfgang Bosbach, a parliamentary leader of the Christian Democrats, who led the charge for his ouster. Within a few weeks, however, Fischer had weathered the storm—and been inoculated against further revelations of his checkered past.

The foreign minister's survival was a testament not only to his own political skills but to Germany's own recent history. No other nation has undergone the kind of reinvention experienced by Germany since 1945: from defeated perpetrator of the Holocaust to stable democracy, economic superpower, and leader of a united Europe. As the American journalist and longtime Berlin resident Paul Hockenos argues in his absorbing new book, *Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic*, Germany's metamorphosis was in some ways made possible by the leftist rabble-rousers who operated on the fringes of society in the 1960s and '70s but became a vital part of the political process. To be sure, Fischer's rise to power was partly due to the quirks of Germany's parliamentary system: in the elections of 1998, Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats formed a coalition government with Fischer's Greens—who had received a serviceable 6.7 percent of the seats in the Bundestag—and Fischer, as party leader, reaped the Foreign Ministry as a prize. But it also reflects how the concerns of Fischer and his comrades—unflinching acknowledgment of the country's Nazi past, environmental activism, a moral stand on atrocities such as ethnic cleansing in the Balkans—became the core values of the Greens, and, ultimately, of wider German society.

Fischer's own life exemplified Germany's transformation. He was born three years after the end of the war, in April 1948, the middle child of ethnic Germans whose ancestors had migrated to Austro-Hungarian-ruled Budapest and its environs in the eighteenth century. Fischer's father, Jozsef, was a Hungarian nationalist with no great affection for the Nazis; but in early 1946, Hungary expelled the Fischers and thousands of other ethnic Germans, and the Fischers were cast adrift in the ruins of postwar Germany. Eventually the family settled in Offnuengen, a Catholic hamlet near Stuttgart. At the time, Germany was in the middle of an economic revival led by its first postwar chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, who embraced NATO even as he stocked his cabinet with former Nazis and kept his countrymen's eyes averted from the Third Reich's crimes. Fischer was a precocious rebel, recoiling from the stultifying conformity, blindness, and materialism of his parents and their generation. He dropped out of high school, and dabbled in anti-NATO peace protests. (Adenauer had allowed the United States to deploy nuclear weapons on German soil.) Even his wedding was a

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From street protester to foreign minister: Joschka Fischer was Germany's first pop-star politician.

Bongarts/Getty Images

form of rebellion: he ran away to Sweden to marry his teenage girlfriend, Ede, thumbing his nose at antiquated German laws that forbade couples under the age of twenty-one to wed without their parents' permission.

The early sections of Hockenos's book are the liveliest. Hockenos charts the rise of the left in West Germany in the 1960s and '70s, and identifies Fischer's central and ever-shifting place in that world. The vibrant and sometimes violent scene that flourished in Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and other German cities borrowed its style from the youth revolution going on in the United States—galvanized by the Vietnam War, the civil rights struggle, and the music of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Bob Dylan. But like the student uprising that convulsed Paris in 1968, the German youth rebellion had its own cast of characters, vocabulary, and dynamic. For Fischer and his scruffy comrades, life centered around nightspots such as Club Voltaire, where they smoked and drank through the night while plotting protests against Vietnam, nukes, U.S.-backed military dictatorship in Chile, and Germany's Nazi legacy. (One of the most problematic issues for the left was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: though sentiments favored the underdog Palestinians, Germany's Nazi past made such a position morally excruciating.) Fischer and other young radicals holed up in "squats"—abandoned apartment buildings in war-damaged neighborhoods of Frankfurt—where they reveled in their poverty and sexual freedom while fighting pitched battles with the police. Violent Marxist-Leninist cells such as the Baader-Meinhof Gang were Fischer's contemporaries. But the street-smart Fischer, who recoiled from their acts of terror, aligned himself with raucous but essentially nonviolent protest leaders such as France's Danny "the Red" Cohn-Bendit and Germany's homegrown Rudi Duetschke.

Hockenos is excellent in tracing the rise of the Green movement from a fringe collection of tree huggers into a groundbreaking force for change in German society. To a great extent he credits Petra Kelly—the waiflike, indefatigable, half-American, half-German woman at the head of the movement—with directing the group's emergence as a political player. Riding the controversy over nuclear power in the aftermath of the Three Mile Island near disaster, the Greens started with victories in local council elections and steadily gathered momentum to the 1982 national elections, in which the party captured 2.1 million votes nationwide and won twenty-eight seats in the Bundestag. It would take another sixteen years—a period that saw the "eternal chancellorship" of Helmut Kohl and his conservative Christian Democratic Union, the fall of Berlin Wall, and German reunification—before the Greens grabbed a costarring role in the German government. By then, Petra Kelly was dead (murdered in 1993 by her lover, who then turned the gun on himself), the Green environmental crusade had gained wide acceptance, and Fischer was charting an independent, activist course in German foreign policy. In perhaps his finest hour, he mobilized Green support behind NATO's intervention in Kosovo, arguing that the country's own Nazi past compelled it to take action to avert another genocide.

Fischer hardly comes off as an unblemished hero. Despite his popularity, Hockenos's book portrays him as very much the cock of the walk—self-absorbed, petty, and often cruel toward his underlings. An ambitious workaholic with Clintonian appetites, he ballooned to 250 pounds during his years in Bonn, thanks to a steady intake of liquor and junk food. (He remade himself later with an ascetic regimen of dieting, teetotaling, and marathon training.) He has been a philanderer, a serial husband, and an absentee father. Yet Fischer's immense appeal has been undeniable. He was Germany's first pop-star politician—fluent in English, fast on his feet, utterly comfortable in the halls of power. He served as a passionate voice for a new Germany, one fully cognizant of its dark history yet confident enough to assert itself on the world stage. "[That] a man like Fischer could make his way, not only from the outer fringes of the republic to its center, but also from the very bottom of the social ladder to the very top [was] a feat unthinkable in the highly stratified Germany of old," Hockenos writes. "This kind of trajectory ... signaled to the world that Germany was different now—more colorful, more liberal, more spontaneous." Hockenos makes a powerful case that Fischer, as much as any figure in postwar Germany, was responsible for that transformation. WM

Joshua Hammer is a writer living in Berlin. He is most recently the author of *Yokohama Burning: The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II.* Hammer is currently at work on a book about German colonial Africa and the twentieth century's first genocide.

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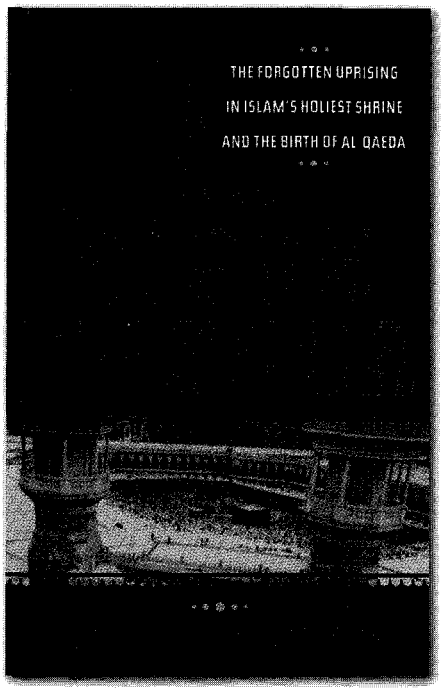
Mecca Deal



The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of al-Qaeda

by Yaroslav Trofimov
Doubleday, 301 pp.

How a botched Saudi hostage crisis paved the way for al-Qaeda

By Christian Caryl

If you're one of those people who believe that history is basically a comedy of errors, you'll love Yaroslav Trofimov's *The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of al-Qaeda*. It describes a savage, bloody, and remarkably consequential event that was staged by a bunch of deluded radicals, kept secret for days by one of the world's most tyrannical governments, and then completely and fatefully misunderstood by the outside world. For the nearly three decades since it occurred, it's been fitfully concealed and virtually forgotten. Yet the world would be a completely different place if it had never happened.

Trofimov's story focuses on the 1979 *hajj*, the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. As the traditional rituals were winding down that November, a group of young Islamist fanatics broke open caches of hidden weapons and took over the Grand Mosque, seizing several dozen hapless pilgrims from around the world in the process. The leader of the attackers, a wild-eyed Saudi Bedouin from a part of the kingdom that had long nursed a grudge against the royal family, announced to his bewildered "guests" that they were about to have the privilege of personally greeting the Mahdi, Islam's version of the messiah, whose appearance would usher in the end of history and, as a beneficial side effect, prompt the collapse of the Saudi regime. That latter point might have seemed trivial alongside the impending apocalypse, but of course it wasn't. The Saudi royal family had spent the 1970s wallowing in its burgeoning oil wealth, and the result was a contradictory culture of ostentatious corruption, high living, and some distinctly un-Islamic practices. The government's cautious sallies into modernization—such as allowing female news readers on TV—had infuriated more conservative elements, and particularly the clergy, who feared the erosion of their sere Wahabi version of the faith as well as the associated diminishment of their power.

On the surface of things, the occupiers of the mosque shocked the Saudi establishment and the global *umma*, or Muslim community, by their sacrilegious wielding of weapons in the holiest sanctuary of Islam. Yet at the same time they were also tapping into an undercurrent of anger against the perceived hypocrisy of the Saudi dynasty that would later inspire young Osama bin Laden and a generation of radicals who vowed to topple their own "un-Islamic" governments. (As it happened, Osama's billionaire dad had finished a costly refurbishing of the Grand Mosque just before the terrorist takeover, and would give crucial help to the Saudi government forces charged with retaking the holiest of holies by supplying them with blueprints.) For the record, I'm not entirely convinced we're dealing with the "birth" of al-Qaeda here. The charismatic but loopy rebel leader, Juhayman, seems less like the midwife of a movement than a random extra who has wandered onto the wrong movie set. But, of course, there's certainly a grain of truth to the notion that bin Laden and others ultimately took heart from this example of how far you could get by challenging the House of Saud on its own terrain.

I hope Yaroslav Trofimov (who, I must confess, is a friend of mine) gets some of the recognition he so richly deserves for this book. (It's worth noting that he has also supplied us with much great reporting on the Islamic world from his day job as a correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal*.) *The Siege of Mecca* reminds me a bit of those heroic journalists and academics who managed to shed light on the most inaccessible corners of the old Soviet Union at its most hermetic. Trofimov, who includes Arabic among his half-dozen or so lan-

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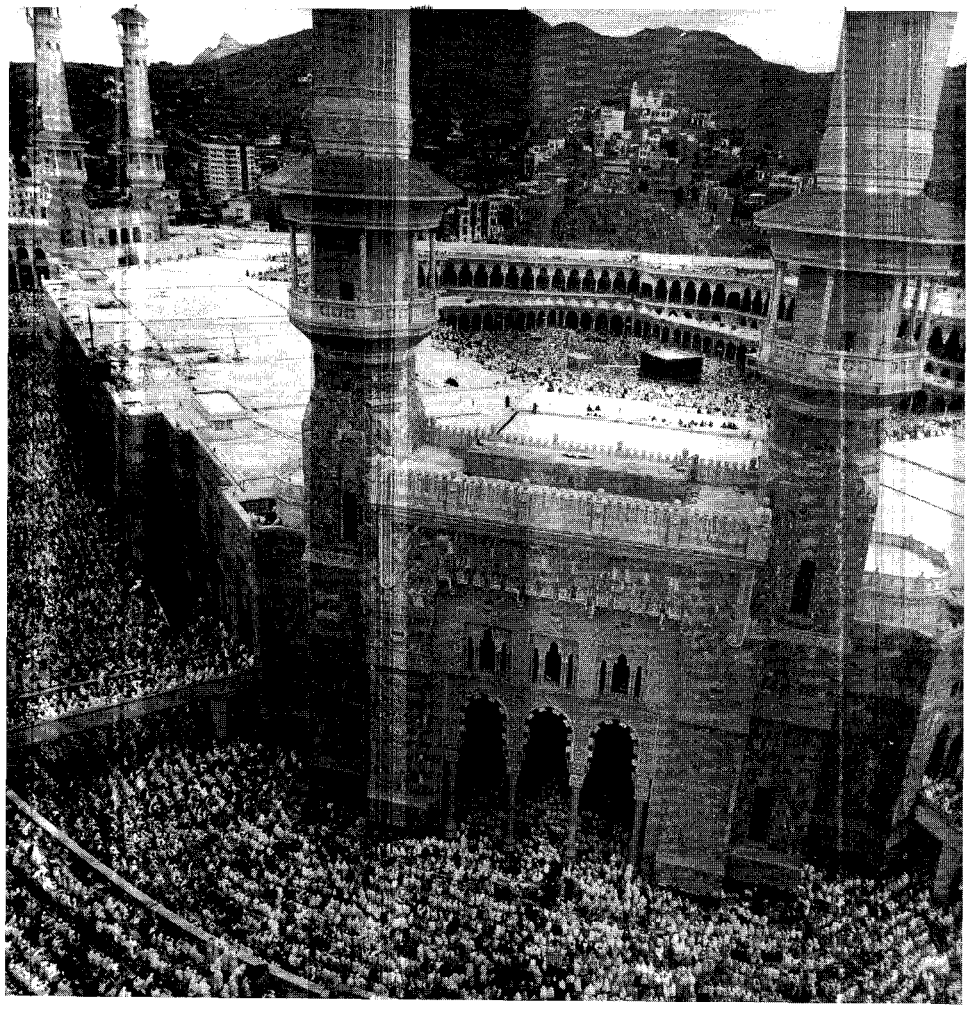

Radical change: The 1979 siege of Mecca was a savage, bloody, and remarkably consequential event.

Associated Press

guages, has defied the strictures of one of the world's most secretive regimes in order to bring us this story, tapping a range of impressively obscure written sources (including previously classified U.S. government documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests) as well as tracking down a remarkable assortment of people involved in the incident. The brief afterword that describes his adventures during his reporting is alone worth the price of the book. One of his sources is an ex-rebel who, after repenting for his misdeeds, has gone on to life as a Saudi government employee with a PhD in Islamic studies. The subject at first thinks that Trofimov wants to interview him about his own writings on Islamic history:

> *Later that day, once I sat down in the man's home and showed him a picture of himself, shackled to other bloodied militants in the courtyard of the Mecca Hotel in December 1979, all color receded from his face. He started giggling nervously, fidgeting and looking for ways to change the subject. At first he claimed it was not him in the picture. Realizing that I did not believe his denials, he sighed and just said: "Those who were there all either forgot or don't want to remember." Minutes later, he got alarmed that even such a sterile conversation with me would land him back in the torture chambers.*

This man, of course, was one of the lucky ones. His comrades either died during the fighting or were beheaded after being taken prisoner and subjected to weeks of merciless interrogation. Not that he's the only one who still has something to hide. The House of Saud has yet to allow the full story of those two weeks in 1979 to be told inside the country, and for good reason. For days after the rebels took over the mosque, the Saudi government's sole response was a four-sentence press communiqué that vaguely named the attackers "deviators" while falsely implying that the authorities had regained control of the mosque. In reality the rebels were bloodily repelling wave after wave of government soldiers. Many of Juhayman's men had served in the Saudi National Guard, training that they put to good use during the battle for control of the mosque. Trofimov estimates that the two weeks of fighting took more than a thousand lives, but the real figure may never be known.

Once the loyalist forces finally achieved their objective, the ultraconservative clergy (some of whom had provided the rebels with intellectual inspiration) deftly turned the whole mess to their own advantage. In return for a religious ruling condemning the occupiers the Saudi Islamic establishment demanded, and received, assurances that the government would cease its modernizing "innovations" and resume pouring cash into propping up Wahabi doctrine at home and abroad. As Trofimov points out, the takeover literally put the fear of God into the royal family, which would soon discover the benefits of exporting radical discontent to places like Afghanistan while shoveling concessions to the most reactionary elements inside the kingdom. Needless to say, we are still living with the aftereffects of that policy.

The Saudi government's failure to name the culprits would literally prove lethal. The Carter administration, still clumsily trying to deal with the hostage crisis in Iran, immediately declared the occupiers of the mosque to be Iranians. Ayatollah Khomeini retaliated by putting the blame on the Americans. Which version did the faithful believe? You get three guesses. Mobs stormed the U.S. embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing a U.S. Marine guard and supplying the Muslim world with yet another of its great anti-American conspiracy theories. It's a crucial incident that has long been relegated to some dusty attic of American collective memory. Trofimov, however, is not the only one to have brought it back to mind; it has also been reconstructed (in somewhat greater detail) by Steve Coll in his book *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. It's funny, isn't it, how so much of the relatively recent history of our own interaction with the world has turned out to require urgent excavation at the hands of people like Coll and Trofimov? I don't know where we'd be without them. WM

Christian Caryl is the Tokyo bureau chief of *Newsweek*. He has reported from thirty-seven countries, including Russia, Afghanistan, North Korea, and Iraq.

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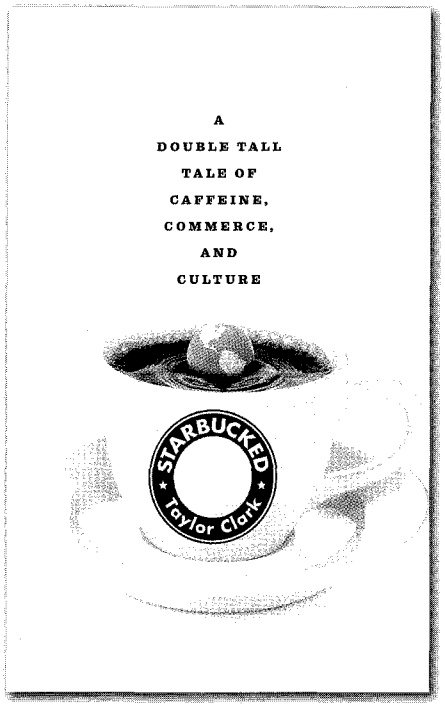
Drip Grind



Starbucked: A Double Tall Tale of Caffeine, Commerce, and Culture

by Taylor Clark

Little Brown and Company, 289 pp.

Taylor Clark's weak case against Starbucks

By Doron Taussig

It was about halfway through Taylor Clark's *Starbucked* that I decided I should read the book inside a Starbucks establishment. Not as some sort of anthropological experiment (though certainly, if material were to present itself ...), but because, as part of the minority of American adults that doesn't drink coffee, I'm just not that familiar with the stores. I had been in them, sure, and understood that Starbucks was a major chain. But the omnipresent, possibly villainous cultural entity Clark was describing didn't resemble the hazy little dark-green cafés I saw in the back of my mind.

The half of the book I had already read was basically just a biography of a company. Clark begins with a few examples of Starbucks's ubiquity—did you know there's a Starbucks at Guantanamo Bay? along the Great Wall of China?—and then explains how this situation came to pass. In brief: coffee in America was popular but crappy; some guy from Seattle started driving to Vancouver to buy better beans, then went into business selling the stuff; a housewares salesman from New York named Howard Schultz noticed that a small Seattle outfit was selling huge numbers of his coffeemakers, and got involved with the company; Schultz visited Italy, found the latte, and now there's a Starbucks on every damn corner in the country.

More fascinating than the early chronology is Clark's research into Starbucks's painstaking marketplace maneuverings. Starbucks is well known for its utilization of the "third place" concept, but we get to read about the focus groups where Americans first revealed that they were willing to pay more for their coffee—even if they were just getting it to go—if they were in what felt like a "public living room." We also get clued in to the thinking behind Starbucks's unique vernacular (names like "grande Valencia latte" not only lend a patina of sophistication to a product, but also build brand loyalty); we learn that Starbucks deliberately locates stores on the driver's righthand side as she heads downtown so she won't have to make a left turn across traffic; we shake our heads at the revelation that, in 2002, Starbucks introduced the vanilla and coconut Crème Frappucino in order "to capitalize on the expected popularity of the color white."

All of this is the product of able and enthusiastic reporting, though I sometimes wished Clark had better filtered his material—I don't really care how Ottoman sultans took their coffee. His tone is of similarly mixed effectiveness: Clark carries us along with a friendly, wiseass voice, which sometimes works, but at other times he makes jokes that you half-expect to be followed by a loud "*Ba-dum cha!*" I took to writing "hit" or "miss" in the margin next to heavy-handed punch lines. (The final score was 12–9 in favor of the hits, but still.)

I read the second half of *Starbucked* in two different Starbucks stores, drinking a Giant Peach Tazo tea and a mango juice, which were, respectively, terrible and highly acceptable. In one store, I sat at a table designed like a chess board. ("You're not working! You're playing a game!") It was a strange way to absorb Clark's sweeping exploration of whether Starbucks is destroying the world.

Starbucked grew out of an article Clark wrote for the Portland, Oregon–based *Willamette Week*, in which he identified "charges" against Starbucks and found the company guilty or not guilty. He does much the same thing in the book, tackling five primary complaints about the chain: 1) Starbucks drives local, independent coffeehouses out of business; 2) Starbucks exploits Third World coffee growers; 3) coffee is bad for you;

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4) Starbucks exploits its employees; 5) by destroying cultural diversity, Starbucks is "homogenizing the planet."

Two of these allegations are dispatched completely. Regarding the dangers of coffee, Clark argues that while caffeine is addictive, "it's no drug of abuse," and, despite centuries of rumors to the contrary, there are no health risks associated with moderate (say, three cups a day) consumption. As for the claim that Starbucks destroys independent coffeehouses, it certainly *sounds* true. But the reality turns out to be exactly the opposite: Clark presents statistics suggesting that when Starbucks moves into a community, it creates a market for coffeehouses that wasn't there before. Local outlets then become the alternative to the big chain. "Paradoxically," Clark writes, "the surest way to boost sales at your mom-and-pop café may be to have a Starbucks move in next door."

Things get more complicated when Clark examines the company's role in the global coffee market. What's clear is that Latin American coffee farmers have it bad: only about a nickel of your $4 cappuccino goes to the people who grew the beans, and the lifestyles of many coffee farmers reflect the industry's non-lucrative nature. What's less clear is what can be done about this, or how Starbucks fits into that picture.

The coffee trade is unhealthy for two reasons, Clark says: because the United States refuses to permit quotas that would prevent surpluses, and because a few behemoth buyers like Nestlé purchase large quantities of really bad, really cheap coffee (they cover up the taste with artificial flavors). The best-known proposed fix for these problems is what is called "fair trade," an arrangement in which consumers willingly pay higher prices in exchange for assurances that their coffee was acquired ethically.

Starbucks hasn't made much of a commitment to fair trade. But to Clark, this isn't very damning, because he doesn't regard fair trade as a viable solution to the coffee problem. Fair trade farmers, he says, get paid a fixed price, so they have no incentive to produce quality coffee—"It's an open secret," he writes, "that Fair Trade beans have historically been much lower in quality than their unsanctified cousins." And how many consumers will really pay a higher price for *worse* coffee? Starbucks, meanwhile, buys high-quality beans on the open market, for which it typically pays a few cents less per pound than the sanctioned fair trade price (last year, it paid more). Clark believes that this approach has the potential to raise living standards for far more farmers than fair trade, which is, essentially, an elaborate charity. "If you want to advance the welfare of farmers and their families," he concludes, "you'll have to indulge your taste for high-quality beans as often as possible."

A couple of caveats should probably be added here. Laura Raynolds, codirector of the Center for Fair and Alternative Trade Studies at Colorado State University, told me that focusing on the price of coffee misses some of the main points of fair trade, such as ensuring that the money from bean sales actually reaches coffee farmers rather than middlemen, and equipping those farmers with information to improve their negotiating positions. (She also objected to the statement that fair trade

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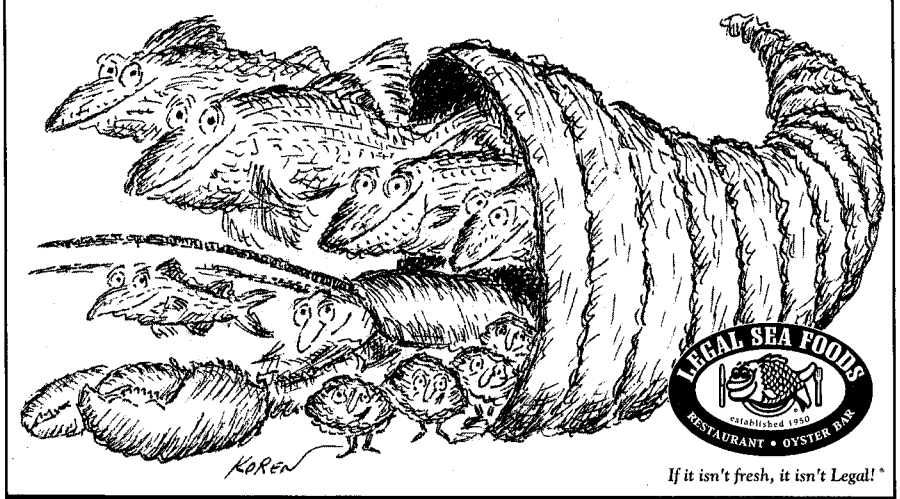

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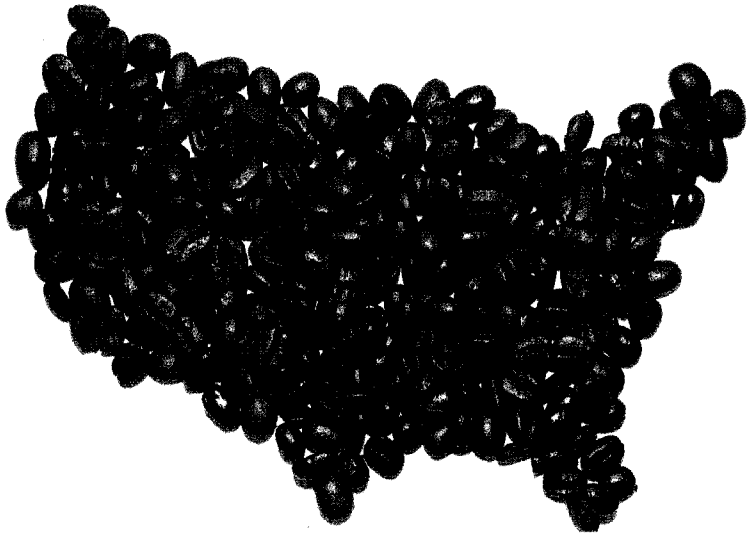

beans were of low quality.) But all in all, Clark makes a strong case: Starbucks's indirect relationship with producers, and its less-than-odious purchasing behaviors, at least partly mitigate its culpability for conditions in the coffee market.

By now you may have noticed that Starbucks seems to be getting off the hook. This is not because Clark is shilling for the company; in fact, he takes pains to emphasize that (contrary to its rhetoric) the coffee purveyor has not *intended* to help anyone. The author's approach is measured, thoughtful, and fair—and I say this because, when Clark discusses Starbucks's treatment of its own employees, I think he gets it largely wrong.

"Paradoxically," Clark writes, "the surest way to boost sales at your mom-and-pop café may be to have a Starbucks move in next door."

Starbucks is a perennial presence on Fortune's "Best Companies to Work For" list, in part because it offers employees who work more than twenty hours a week a low-cost health care plan. But it has also been criticized for paying low wages, assigning terrible schedules, and cutting part-timers' hours before they hit the threshold for insurance eligibility (only 42 percent of Starbucks's employees receive its much-heralded insurance plan—a lower percentage even than Wal-Mart).

Clark explores this debate by talking to Daniel Gross, a Starbucks barista and law student from New York who for years has been pressing his coworkers to join the radical Industrial Workers of the World union. Gross is ridiculous (he doesn't think cops and security guards should be allowed to join unions, because they have "chosen to betray their class interests"), and makes for an unfortunate spokesman for baristas; Clark also recites Starbucks's response to would-be organizers—that a union isn't necessary in such an enlightened company—without pointing out that *every company says this*. But eventually, he gets around to the crucial question: Would unionization be appropriate at Starbucks? He tells the story of a Canadian union's failure to keep some Starbucks stores organized, and concludes that, because being a Starbucks barista is so simple and turnover at the job is so high, this might not be a job where a union makes sense. "You can't unionize [cheap service jobs] if nobody wants to keep them," he says.

But doesn't Clark have this backward? Unions don't exist just to help people keep desirable jobs; they exist to make jobs more desirable. It may be true, as Clark says, that being a Starbucks barista will never be hugely fulfilling. But the gig could certainly pay more—when it comes to baristas, there's no complicated global market to negotiate; Starbucks could just write bigger numbers on its payroll checks. Better compensation, more reasonable hours, or more consistent benefits, all of which a good union could help to bring, might make baristas more inclined to keep their jobs.

At the end of his chapter on labor relations, Clark asks Gross whether he can't just "move on to something better." Of course he can. But not everyone can, or will, and at the end of the day, *somebody*'s going to be working at Starbucks. It's not unreasonable to expect such a highly profitable company to permit those people to have more economically dignified lives.

In his closing section, Clark addresses the question of cultural homogenization—the idea that, by being everywhere, Starbucks is killing the individual character of far-flung communities. This, finally, is where we find out who, precisely, has been "Starbucked." It turns out that we all have. "Starbucks diminishes the world's diversity every time it builds a new café," Clark writes. "The company, by its very nature, endangers cultural uniqueness, and this is why I am not a Starbucks customer."

This brings me back, as you knew it would, to my own experience reading *Starbucked* in Starbucks. Because, while I certainly had no trouble finding the place, I didn't get a sense of being *overwhelmed* by it. In fact, here is what I saw in those two Starbucks locations: People buying coffee. People drinking coffee. People waiting for the restroom. People working on laptops. And, on one occasion, a barista giving a tourist directions to a nearby café.

Think about that last one: someone came into a Starbucks looking for directions away from it, and a Starbucks employee was happy to help. Starbucks might be everywhere, and that might be annoying, but it's not all that fearsome—it's not, as Clark believes, "strip[ping] the richness and zest from our own lives." It's just a coffee shop, and it doesn't affect people that dramatically. Unless, of course, you work there. WM

Doron Taussig is senior writer for the Philadelphia *City Paper*.

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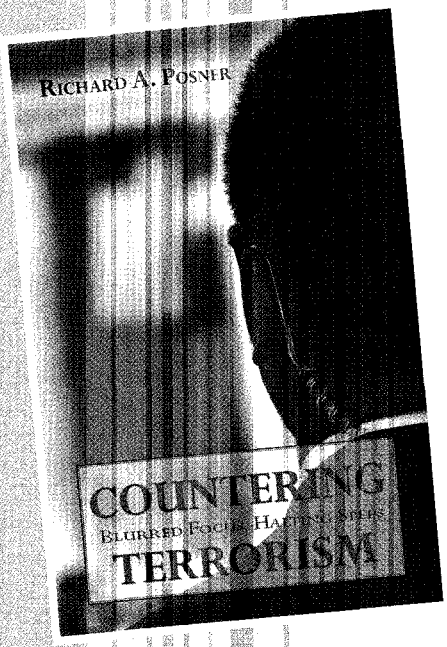

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Richard A. Posner is a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School. He is the author of hundreds of articles and dozens of books, including *Uncertain Shield: The U.S. Intelligence System in the Throes of Reform* (2006) and *Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11* (2005).

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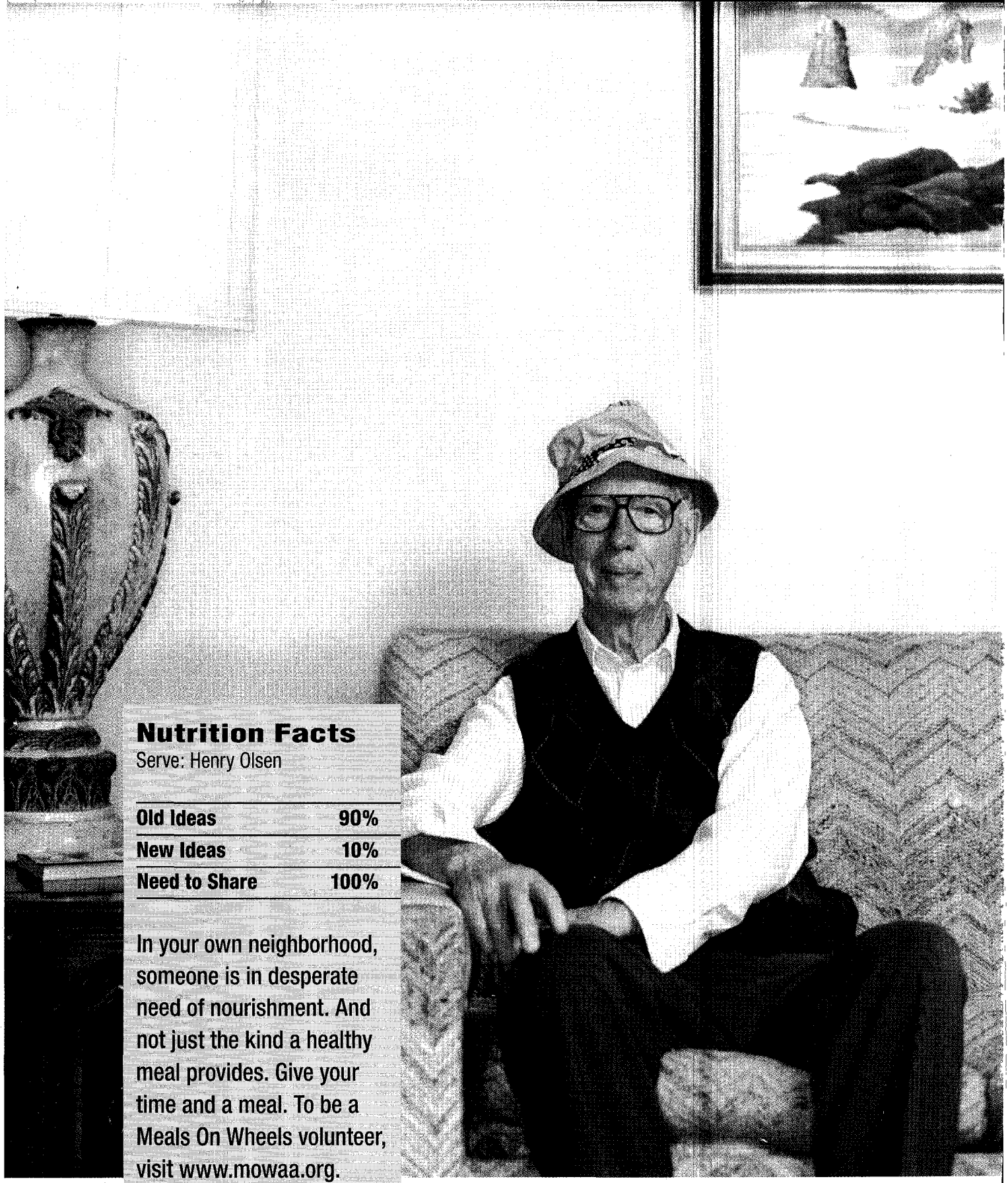

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